This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

NEDL TRANSFER
HN 3S6A 1

[redacted]oston Library Society,

No. 18 BOYLSTON PLACE.

ADDED TO THE LIBRARY

22nd day of December 1873

To be returned in 7 days.

A fine of Three Cents will be incurred for each day this volume is detained beyond that time.

CANCELLED

1940

[redacted]

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

MAULEVERER'S DIVORCE:

A STORY OF WOMAN'S WRONGS.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

"WHITEFRIARS," "THE CITY BANKER," &c.

"Laws are that make the crimes that they condemn:
They have judged us; now let us judged of them!"—*L'Estrange.*

"Pelican's food, pelican's food, my masters! with mine own beak I rend my breast, and ye feed at the scatterings."—*A. Marlowe.*

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
CHARLES J. SKEET, PUBLISHER,
10, KING WILLIAM STREET,
CHARING CROSS.
1858.

Digitized by Google

R 5633 m
v. 2
KP882

HARVARD UNIVERSITY LIBRARY SEP 8 1941

MICROFILMED AT HARVARD

Digitized by Google

MAULEVERER'S DIVORCE;

A STORY OF WOMAN'S WRONGS.

CHAPTER I.

A RUNAWAY MATCH.

I HAVE dwelt, perhaps, at too great length on the series of chances and contrivances that led to my very early and imprudent marriage. But these are not unnecessary preliminaries to the story of its barbarous and unjust dissolution. There is scarcely a particular I have recorded but throws some dark illuminating ray on th futurity in store for me!

Digitized by Google

I shall hasten, however, over all that seems to me of minor importance in the progress of events towards my great catastrophe.

Immediately after that strangely impromptued ceremony of union between Scarlatt Suett and myself, at the Kerig y Drudion, he led me to the carriage in waiting for us. Sophia and Luxmoor followed. Sir Vivian disappeared as soon as the abrupt ceremonial was brought to a conclusion. And though it was very difficult to imagine that such could be the case, Scarlatt at once declared his object in insisting on its performance was an expectation that it would induce us to delay our flight, either until Lord Mauleverer could have time to arrive at Plas Newydd, or come upon us in pursuit. Such a marriage with a minor might easily be set aside! It was, therefore, more than ever necessary to hasten our flight into Scotland. He had only assented to what had been done, because, armed as the lad was, and evidently seized with a fit of insanity, he must have hazarded his life to take his weapons from him, and could not, besides, answer for what he might have done to the "young devil" himself, in the event of a struggle!

We proceeded accordingly, at the utmost pos-

Digitized by Google

sible speed of horse and rail, into Scotland, and went through the degrading, farcical ceremony of a marriage in the border style of celebration —if celebration it can be called—in the presence of the two Luxmoors. I remember with what a deep feeling of humiliation and shame I found myself standing before a great, raw-boned Scotchman, who looked infinitely more like a Highland drover than a priest, and smelt of tobacco and whiskey all around, on the tile-paved floor of a toll-bar hovel—listening to an assurance that I was as firmly married as if all the bishops in England had assisted in the operation !—really with one of unutterable dismay and disgust ! But so the brawny forger of hymeneal chains declared to me, no doubt observing my consternation ; while Luxmoor laughed, and, with his inexpressibly offensive leer, observed—but I will not repeat what he observed !

But for my previous marriage, by some formula of the Established Church, I do not think that I should have deemed myself married at all ! No friends—no smiling father—no tear-glistening mother there !—the whole vulgar, hasty rite appeared to me an unblest profanation—the buffoon mockery of a sacred ceremonial ! There

Digitized by Google

was an inexpressible despondency and melancholy in my heart, as we made for the little neighbouring inn, where we were at length to rest from our long and fatiguing journey. I am convinced that had not Sophia been with me to dispel the terror and gloomy feelings — true presentiments!—that gathered round me, not all the bewildering passion and tenderness and cajolery of Scarlatt could have induced me to regard him as a veritable husband, until some more holy and solemn rite had declared him so.

What a divinely beautiful evening it was, too! What a sunset of polished gold shone over the whole sky, as we stepped in at our little hostel-door to partake of such repast as Luxmoor's zealous purveyance had been enabled to secure us!

How comes it that I recall, almost with my organs of sense, the rich perfume of the honeysuckle and sweetbriar that clustered over the doorway of the rustic inn?—The wild screeching drone of a bagpipe, played to divert us at dinner by a wandering old fellow with a hard visage, as weather-stained and many-hued as the coarse plaid he wore, seems still to vibrate on my ears!—That

Digitized by Google

ill-furnished, but not unsavoury repast of ham and eggs, though it vainly wooed my appetite, won the high and substantial commendations of the epicure Luxmoor. And, though tears were continually springing to my eyes, and from the depths of my heart, I remember no banquet at which I have since sat where the talk surpassed in joyous hilarity the triumphant gaiety of my three commensals! Never was Sophia's display of wit more brilliant; but it was like one of fireworks, that diffuse splendour without light! And when she and I were alone after the repast, I can well recollect that we sobbed in one another's arms as if our parting was to be for some disastrous doom. There was no good omen in her words as she left me, indeed! "You are *twice* a wife, dearest! What are you talking about?" she exclaimed. "*Twice a wife!*—and I can tell you, there comes a time to a good number of married folks—there was one with me not so very long ago—before you reconciled poor dear Luxmoor and myself so delightfully!—when they consider themselves a little too much married with being so once!"

And thus, by her own headstrong, unreasoning act of devotion, did the heiress of Mauleverer

Digitized by Google

place herself, and all that might be hers, unreservedly in the power of a husband!—A title which in so many other instances, has been the only distinction from a professed and open pillager and oppressor!

Yet Scarlatt could persuade me that he rejoiced chiefly in our stolen marriage, because he believed that, for aught besides myself and the nobility of birth to which our union allied him, he must remain dependent on my father's forgiveness and favour! He could convince me that he felt grieved rather than exultant in the information I thought I gave him—that it was not so; that my girlish Cinderella fancy would be realised, and that I brought him the dowry of a peerage and of the large landed property of my ancestry!

And yet there was something in his reply that thoroughly chilled my fond enthusiasm, when I told him this. "No, sweetest!" he said; "I cannot hope to share your honours unless I achieve a political position of my own, and can demand it of a ministry! And you must not think I shall content myself with being the mere husband and satellite, shining with reflected light, even of my adored and beautiful baroness!

Digitized by Google

You know I am your *lord* and master in theory! I shall not be happy until I am so in reality!—I mean, so far as regards the first!"

Not happy then!—not happy until a gewgaw sound was added to his name!

Scarlatt wrote from this Scottish inn what I imagined was the first revelation of my true identity to his mother; and thence we continued our wedding excursion. Partly with a view to concealment, partly because my admiration of the writings of Scott made his favourite ground the most tempting possible to me—into the Highlands.

The two Luxmoors were still in our party. Indeed, I would not listen to the suggestion Sophia made, that we ought to part company, in order to mislead or distract pursuit. I could not bear the thought of parting from her! She was my last firm hold on the past; the last assurance I possessed, that in yielding to my tenderness for Scarlatt Suett, I had not done a rash—almost an inexcusable thing!

She had an infinitude of arguments, of reasoning, to satisfy my now perpetually resurging doubts on this point. It was not that my love for my husband was not yet more absorbing

Digitized by Google

impassioned, all-concentrating than that I had borne for my lover! But comprehension of the social fault I had committed dawned upon me in a thousand unexpected lights, and I needed the constant support of Sophia's defying and mutinous genius, to feel satisfied that I had not too far overstepped worldly rules of right by so bold a stride!

Hitherto she had carefully veiled from my inexperience, as well as from the observation of persons who had reason to consider themselves infinitely more skilled in such science, the real and strong characteristics of her mind and character.

Never was there an intellect more audacious, questioning, less disposed to submit to the received maxims of society, than her's! There was, if I may so express myself, a *topsy-turviness* in her notions of things, which she expressed in an infinite variety of paradoxical, disorderly, extremely witty and entertaining forms. She was at war, in her secret heart, with all the established regulations of the world! They were all unfavourable to her projects;—condemned her to an obscurity from which she was determined, at every cost, to emerge; met and con-

Digitized by Google

fronted her with inimical visages at every step of her audacious career; and even now they stand around her, motionless but avenging spectres, that will some day raise their arms of stone, and crush her yet in her hour of highest vainglory and success!

Much in the tone of Sophia's conversation, which I ought to have dreaded, excited only my laughter and amusement, so brilliantly did the wit in it dazzle my understanding, to lose sight of the worthless broken-bottle material of all that seeming glitter of diamonds! The sarcastic and levelling edge to her remarks did not displease a listener who, although the heiress of an ancient and high-placed race, cherished such wild and untutored notions as those of my girlhood. Moreover, all this was but theory; in practice no one could be more observant of the words and caprices of superiors than Sophia. These were the engines she chiefly worked with to her own advantage; but no doubt they required a watchfulness and enslavement of her proud self-will, which, when occasion served, she retaliated with an exaction of fearful interest.

I must in fairness admit, Sophia possessed really brilliant qualities that ustly entitled her

Digitized by Google

to—and have in a degree obtained for her—far higher admiration than that of an inexperienced girl, to whom the reality of things was too little known to detect what was exaggerated and false in a witty mockery. There were profound depths in that gulfing, shifting-sanded intellect, depths of ruin though they were! And the erratic play of her wit at times warned from the quagmire when it was not engaged in the more congenial task of misleading into it. With me, to whom a solitary and neglected childhood had communicated a sombre tinge to the ideas, the wildfire dance of Sophia's was always a welcome relief.

But the spell of spells with this mistress of darker arts than ever magician or necromancer boasted, lay in persuading me that she more than reciprocated my affections; that she loved me with the devotion and entirety my own intensity of feeling ever demanded from its objects. Almost an orphan, and alone from the cradle, I now believed I had found the most endearing qualities of all the female relationships I had forfeited, or had ever known, in this friend, whom my own heart had chosen by a kind of natural sympathy from the first. My nature was trustful as well as loving, and expanded like a

Digitized by Google

flower of a deep cup, to receive those palmy dews of love and sisterly tenderness that seemed to distil from heaven itself into it.

And was all this celestial show, on Sophia's part, only a beauteous but unreal phantasmagoria? Could it be that she hated me always—then as now—when she has injured me farther beyond her own forgiveness than even mine? Did she in reality envy me my superior fortunes also at periods when she knew well that my chief delight in their actual possession would have been to share them with herself?—Without loving Scarlatt—for I am persuaded she never loved him—did she grudge me that excess of passionate affection he evinced, and doubtless felt for me, on the first period of our union? And still cherishing a species of insane idolatry for her libertine husband, did her accursed and boundless spirit of coquetry already suggest to her a satisfaction to be derived from depriving me of the affections of mine?

No: surely this notion would have been too premature! I am even of opinion that Sophia herself was wearied of the weaving of so many vain intrigues, and inclined at length to rest from spinning snares out of her own finest filaments

Digitized by Google

as well as those of all around her. Perhaps, if her husband had not been, what in the bitterness of her heart she had called him, "the most worthless of his worthless sex," she might have taken place thenceforward among the better of her own! I do not dispute that there were the roots of good, generous, even magnanimous qualities in her, that might have produced flowers and fruit but for the blasting of a bad man's association, which distilled poisons into the plant at almost every stage of its development. But besides she must have discerned that, at that period, I was fixed beyond the possibility of being shaken, in the core of my young husband's strongest passions and ambitious impulses! It is very possible also that her own feelings indisposed her to any attempt upon him at the time. I have reason to think that however profoundly wounded and irritated her vanity might be, her sentiments towards Scarlatt were of a contemptuously hostile order, at this juncture; and that even she! could not have feigned so much to the contrary as would have been necessary in returning on her forsaken tack. Moreover, if ever she really loved anyone, it was Luxmoor; and they were now in the honey-

Digitized by Google

moon of a reconciliation, which, with persons of their capricious but vehement passions, was probably not greatly declined from the glow of the first of love.

At all events, she suffered no emotion that could have roused misgiving to appear on the surface. The most jealous scrutiny must have been foiled or quieted by the perfect, joyous ease of her demeanour in our society, throughout our whole bridal trip, when so much must have occurred to excite painful feelings, had she cherished any on account of the disastrous triumph I had achieved. In his eagerness to show his devotion to me, and utter renunciation of all sentiments calculated to cause me uneasiness, Scarlatt was even occasionally—and painfully to myself was it visible—almost rude in his neglect of Sophia! The delirium of exultation he indulged in over his success in achieving a bride to whom he imputed such overwhelming advantages, personal as well as social, could not have been pleasing to her! She must have been wearied with his endless effusions of admiration, and the constant absorption of his thoughts and attentions upon one whom she probably looked upon, in her secret heart, as a silly, rash, head-

Digitized by Google

strong schoolgirl. His perpetual appeals to her to share these bridegroom transports, must have been irksome to any woman! "Is she not beautiful, *Mrs. Luxmoor?*—is she not, now? And am I not the very happiest happy fellow in the world?" resounded continually in her ears! Her praises were claimed for every gesture, smile, expression of mine! In a manner were extorted, though the wonderful patience and dexterity of Sophia never allowed her weariness, and possible reluctance of assent, to appear in the seemingly playful spontaneity and enthusiasm of her replies.

It was fagging work, however, I doubt not! —and thence possibly her insinuations of the advantages of parting companies for awhile. But she dared not press her wish, I now think, under the notion she might awaken in me suspicions that her feelings towards Scarlatt still, rendered the sight of our happiness distasteful to her.

She and her husband, therefore, accompanied us throughout our tour in the Highlands—all of us, of course, under assumed names. Luxmoor even took the fancy to distribute Russian titles of nobility among us; and at most of our

Digitized by Google

resting places we either astonished the secluded inhabitants by gabbling among ourselves a wilder dialect than their own, compounded of several languages, which they took to be the best St. Petersburgh Sclavonic, or by speaking English with an excess of refinement and purity almost as foreign.

With all his bad qualities, and total want of moral feeling, Luxmoor abundantly supported his reputation for intellectual ability, in this closer and more habitual intercourse. There was no such thing as *ennui* in the company of the Reverend Carolus! His flow of spirits was inexhaustible; he abounded in striking and novel anecdote, and could throw the most surprising and unexpected illustrations on almost every subject he touched. How could so much talent be so vilely allied to so much vice? And, to do him but bare justice, notwithstanding his alleged brutality under the influence of liquor, good nature seemed to be a marked characteristic of his singular composition when not. And during this time of our association, Sophia's vigilance protected him from very frequent or conspicuous yielding to his most degrading

Digitized by Google

habit. But when he did succumb to it in any noticeable degree, he showed the cloven foot very plainly, certainly. The sensuality of his nature and ideas then glowed out in a thousand indescribable emanations—and a furnace seemed suddenly opened where all was cool and orderly before!

The reconciliation I had effected between him and his wife had all the appearance of being complete and permanent. Luxmoor declared that it was equivalent to a new bridal with him, and that he loved his Sophia better than he had ever loved her before! Yet, truth to say, the exhibitions of this tenderness were not always of the most refined order, and, in my opinion, sometimes excited her deep though silent disgust. And at times, in fact, they resembled a burlesque of the youthful bridegroom ardour and enthusiasm of Scarlatt that annoyed me too!—A dance of the blooming, rose-wreathed Hours executed by leering hamadryads! I am not assured, however, that Sophia instituted comparisons to Scarlatt's advantage in this. She had intellect and taste to have rendered Luxmoor's behaviour, on occasions, disgusting to

Digitized by Google

her: but her heart was not chaste. Nor was her temperament that of a Lucretia! I do not wrong her in saying so. She has proved it.

Very rarely, however, was a shade of chagrin ever allowed to appear on Sophia's countenance. She was gay always: the life and cheer of the party. Once or twice only I detected something in her glance at me of thoughtful and even sorrowful, that puzzled and a little startled me! But the expression vanished almost as soon as I caught it—and an increase of gaiety on the contrary usually left me no pretext for asking the meaning of those momentary revelations of the spirit, relaxing from its tedious stand to arms. Nay, these were the very occasions when she threw the reins on the neck of laughter, and indulged in the wildest caprices of her variable and fantastic wit. Luxmoor had a peculiar skill in playing into her hands in these moods: her genius was, in fact, of his training and tutelage: his own was the robust athlete whose strong muscles and knotted limbs are set in a variety of difficult attitudes, more effectually to display the agility of the lighter harlequin who vaults on his shoulders, or quivers in some almost impossible

Digitized by Google

reversed position, crown to crown, on his coadjutor in the air! And his suggestive observations were often as torches thrust into a cavern of stalactite, in Sophia's rich imagination, that lighted up the particoloured splendors around instantaneously as thought!

Our whole excursion, including in it so much of the excitement and bewilderment of an escape was thus also one of the gayest of revels! Money abounded with us. Luxmoor was the king of caterers; he was in his most natural element feasting and merrymaking; no man was ever more perfectly skilled than this luxurious sage in every provocative of appetite—in promoting the pleasures of the table! He had studied many sciences, but often declared he was weary of them all but this one! Scarlatt and I, absorbed in each other and in our love as we were, could not but acknowledge that in sparing us so vulgar though necessary a diligence, Luxmoor was an invaluable addition to the party.

When, in addition to all these elements of satisfaction, we add the contemplation of the grandest and most striking objects of nature, associated with the most romantic and pathetic recollections genius had as it were coloured into

Digitized by Google

the very atmosphere of the scenes we visited—in spite of our dread of my father's pursuit, time sped with us on rapid and nigh shadowless wings. It is true that only in Sophia could I discover any real and intimate sympathy in the feelings awakened in me by the visual presence of those scenes I had so often traversed in the charmed pages of the great Scottish romancer. Luxmoor laughed at the bare notion of enthusiasm on such a subject, and professed an almost total ignorance in the matter. He had never read any novel save the Golden Ass of Apuleius, in Greek, he said, and—perhaps making a jest of my ignorance—*that*, for the sake of the excellent morals it inculcated! Scarlatt was perfectly familiar with the works in question; but he took so cold an interest in my enthusiasm, that somehow or other it always chilled in his presence. I believe he had no particular relish for a genius that had done so much to restore the prestige of the past. He was a man of the future, he considered! But he accounted for his indifference by declaring that the dry substantialities of the studies he had pursued, to qualify him for the duties of a statesman, allowed him not to derive enjoyment from any purely fanciful source. In my love

Digitized by Google

and admiration for him, in those days, I could not, and did not, suspect that he lacked a quality for which the possession of all the statistics in the world hardly indemnifies the man who aspires to lead and govern men—imagination.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER II.

ABROAD.

I HAD been soothed all along by assurances that my father would be sure to forgive what he knew to be irrevocable, and that a general reconciliation would be the happy and natural result of the alliance I had contracted. "Fathers always forgive," Sophia repeatedly observed with a laugh—"when they can't help themselves!"

Mine was then an exception—and a very remarkable one. A communication awaited us, at an appointed spot on our tour, from Mrs. Suett, that clearly indicated so. It declared besides, in the most extravagant terms, her own and her husband's enthusiastic approbation of the choice their son had made. It enlarged upon

Digitized by Google

the wonderful relief Scarlatt's letter had afforded herself from a terrible apprehension she avowed she entertained at first that the elopement was with Sophia! She, on her part, she said, neither could nor would ever have forgiven him such a derogation as that! He could not have pleaded even average good looks, after he had seen *what beauty really was*, for such an act of folly! But young Sir Vivian, who brought the news in "having spied us all huddling into the carriage," and who conducted himself in a very strange manner throughout the affair, "laughing at everything one said," insisted he was perfectly certain if there was an elopement at all in the case, it was between Scarlatt and the younger Miss Sutcliffe! And he invited Mrs. Suett to start a pursuit, but in such a queer, jeering style, that for a long time she thought he was only in jest, and of course never thought of taking his advice! Besides, Scarlatt was of age, and no one had the right or the power to hinder him from marrying whom he chose, and his firmness and determination in whatever course he took, she knew rendered dissuasion hopeless! But to crown all, the elder Suett expressed himself pleased that his son had had the spirit and good sense to get above the

Digitized by Google

foolish notions his mother had reared him in, so far as to marry a wife for beauty or sense only! He only hoped that Scarlatt had the cleverness to take them both together in my person, whom he should rejoice beyond measure to receive as a daughter-in-law! He forbade all pursuit—and Mrs. Suett confessed herself to be much reconciled by the hope that her "darling, sweet Helena" really might, after all, be the favoured one! Indeed she could not doubt it, "if her son had eyes in his head!" So they were all getting a little more composed at Plas Newydd, when of a sudden they were startled out of their wits by the arrival of the "Right Honourable Lord Mauleverer" in person!

And now, to the Suetts' great surprise, it turned out there was some secret-acquaintance between his lordship and Sir Vivian! Mrs. Suett knew the two old grandfathers used to be great cronies, but had no notion of this acquaintanceship. Instead of asking for herself or any other member of the family, Lord Mauleverer inquired only for Sir Vivian, whom, it seemed he had been expecting for a whole day at "the castle," until losing patience he had come over in person to inquire the meaning of the delay. For it came

Digitized by Google

out afterwards that his lordship was aware his daughter was living at Plas Newydd, under her assumed name, but disdained them all too much to come for her himself; and so had sent word to "his young friend" to escort Miss Pomeroy home! Sir Vivian had then to drag himself in—very reluctantly evidently—Mrs. Suett herself had seen him going to the reception room, looking more dead than alive!—and confess how "beautifully we had done the meddlesome young gentleman by bolting at once!" And moreover—what Mrs. Suett herself had never for a moment suspected!—Sir Vivian was now obliged to avow to his lordship that he knew I was clandestinely married to Mr. Scarlatt Suett, by the family tutor, the Reverend Carolus Luxmoor, having been himself a witness to a marriage between him and the young lady who resided at Plas Newydd as the sister of Sophia Sutcliffe and a nursery governess. "At a time, no doubt," said Mrs. Suett, in her letter, "when he thought he was *finishing up* Scarlatt's chances of rising in the world, by helping to marry him to a girl without birth or money! For he always disliked you, my dear boy, I know! God knows why! I am sure I could never understand it! And so,

Digitized by Google

I suppose, you played the joke off upon him of inviting him to be a witness to what he must have thought would prove your ruin, whereas, you were marrying, as it turns out, the most beautiful young heiress in the world!"

But Mrs. Suett confessed she thought Sir Vivian had exerted himself to soothe the Lord Mauleverer's really dreadful exasperation on the discovery. Hearing a tremendous ringing of the bell, and a stranger's voice uttering shocking imprecations, she had herself hastened into the apartment, and found Sir Vivian assuring Lord Mauleverer that he did not believe in any premeditated conspiracy "among the Suetts!"—that the affair was strictly a lovematch between the young couple—and that nothing could now be done but to endeavour to pardon them for the fault they had committed—and obviate as much as possible any evil consequences that might arise from the precipitation and indiscretion of the whole proceeding, to Miss Pomeroy.

All reason and persuasion were, however, vain, Mrs. Suett declared. The moment she appeared his lordship "flew at her." She could not have thought it possible a nobleman could have put himself in such a "flusteration" about anything.

Digitized by Google

But seeing's believing! Yet she had never "set eyes" on a man that looked so like a lord before! So savage—so mad-like too! He glared at her like the sign of the Saracen's Head, with his hair flying about in the same way, and his eyes half out of his head, and sparkling as if they had gold dust in them! It frightened her almost out of her senses to see what a taking his lordship was in! Luckily John Thomas was away at his country-house, so that "them two fiery spirits were kept asunder;" and Mrs. Suett declared she went through the interview in the most conciliatory style possible, on her own part, though she really felt herself half-a-dozen times going off into hysterics!

Not that she was frightened by his lordship's threats and furious demand, that his daughter should be instantly surrendered to him! His denunciation of the whole family as a vile nest of conspirators, or his declaration that he would immediately call in the aid of the law, and have her son, and Miss Sutcliffe, and the hedge-parson who pretended to have performed a marriage between his daughter and her infamous deluder, brought to condign justice, as guilty of the abduction and betrayal of a young

Digitized by Google

girl of the tenderest years! Mrs. Suett knew her own innocence, and was not dismayed! But she owned she was fairly turned topsy-turvy by the discovery of who I really was, and the certainty that her dear boy had connected himself in a manner so worthy of what he must "in the long run rise to be," she knew as well as that the sun makes day!

But all she could do to conciliate Lord Mauleverer was in vain. In vain she assured him that none of the family—not her son himself, she believed—was in the least aware of his daughter's real name or rank while resident at Plas Newydd. If it was so, the young people had managed it entirely between themselves, and she and her husband had been kept all along in the dark! But John Thomas, she was sure, would be willing to do everything in his power "to make all straight again." Her son was no beggar!—no rascally fortune-hunter, she begged to tell his lordship!—he would some day be worth his share in half a million of money! He was, besides, as handsome a young man as there was in England, though she said it that should not!—and as accomplished as

Digitized by Google

any nobleman in the land! All was in vain! Lord Mauleverer forgot himself so far as to tell Mrs. Suett, that the entire family was a nest of swindlers, and that he would bring them—one and all—to justice, with their principal, "the broad-shouldered flunkey fellow," whom she called her son! — and he left the house, breathing vengeance and destruction like a madman, and declaring that he would pursue Scarlatt Suett to the ends of the earth to obtain justice upon him! Mrs. Suett plaintively added he had put it into young Sir Vivian's head to think they had done him, too, some grievous wrong, by denouncing them as the robbers and pillagers of the Ap Howel property also, and vowing he would compel them to disgorge their plunder there to the last penny!

Sir Vivian accompanied his lordship to his horse. But he seemed not at all enticed from his old friends by the "nasty attempt" to sow dissension with them! He came back shortly afterwards, and exhorted Mrs. Suett to lose no time in writing to warn her son and *daughter-in-law*, that Lord Mauleverer was going at once before a magistrate to take out a warrant for the

Digitized by Google

arrest of the former, on a charge of abduction and would, no doubt, set an immediate pursuit in motion.

It was evident Sir Vivian had kept the secret of our intended visit to Scotland. Indeed, his conduct throughout the whole transaction threw upon him a lustre of generosity and devotedness that affected me more than I dare now seek words to say! But the warning was not to be despised! We had certainly taken a very circuitous course, and precautions that gave hopes of baffling, for a while, even so exasperated a pursuit. But the penalties of a possible disruption of the ties between us, of the heavy punishment the law might see fit to visit upon Scarlatt, which Luxmoor now placed before us in very strong colours, were too formidable for us to slight the notice we had received. A council of war among us, hastily summoned, came to the decision that it was necessary for Scarlatt and myself to proceed immediately to the continent; and, this resolved, Luxmoor announced that it was impossible for him to accompany us, as he had, unhappily, left some little accounts unpaid in France and Germany,

Digitized by Google

besides having pressing business in England, where he was in hourly expectation that one of his patrons would have a living vacant, for which he intended to be a suitor.

I was now myself willing enough to dispense with Luxmoor's company, for he had of late given way greatly more than at first, to a freedom of language and manners which I disliked exceedingly. But I had the selfishness —or the blind affection, was it?—to hope that Sophia would continue to bear us company awhile. She convinced me, however, that it would be to hazard all the progress she flattered herself she had made in bringing her husband back to a sense of his duties to herself and to society! And I felt it would be egotistical and wrong to persevere with a view solely to the gratification of my own feelings. We parted accordingly, at an obscure Scottish seaport, whence Scarlatt and I embarked for Hamburgh, with the sincerest sorrow and reluctance on my part; on Sophia's, with, at all events, every appearance of the same.

And yet—I know not how it was—but when we were once quit of the societv of Luxmoor

Digitized by Google

and his wife, both my husband and myself seemed to breathe freelier!

* * * *

We resided upwards of three years abroad, in compelled, though apparently voluntary, exile.

During all this period, it was impossible to hope that any change had taken place in my father's vindictive feelings and resolves against my husband.

We heard so from many sources—the most direct being from young Ap Howel, who, it appeared, continued a visitor at Mauleverer during his vacations, and dropped intimations to Mrs. Suett, from time to time, of the state of opinion there, exceedingly discouraging to our hopes. I should have mentioned that, by a strange perversity, Lord Mauleverer resided almost constantly on his estate since the time of his return after my flight. And when she had no longer the consolation of her child's society to expect, my mother was permitted to return from her long continental exile. She was now, however, a confirmed invalid, and rarely left Mauleverer, even when my father, as he now sometimes did, gave a short attendance on parliament.

Digitized by Google

Everything announced a confirmed irreconcileableness on his part. Both Scarlatt and myself, in vain, made every possible attempt to win some sign of forgiveness. From Rome my husband addressed his new father-in-law, for the first time, in an epistle the tone of which I secretly but strongly disapproved, without liking to suggest my reasons for the disapproval. I thought, among other things, that he threw too much of the blame of what had happened upon *me!* He himself considered it necessary to apologise for that obvious feature in the document, by saying that my father would certainly much more readily pardon his child for everything, than a person whose family he disliked, and who he might consider had surreptitiously deprived him of the "comfort of his age."

This sounded to me a very commonplace phrase indeed, but I had not then learned to suspect that Scarlatt's ideas all ran in grooves, and that established phrases were, consequently, the ones he chiefly delighted in and employed. But, to say truth, I was not much pleased to find my husband's disinterested affection for me demonstrated by the assertion that up to the moment when I stood before "the altar of

Digitized by Google

heaven with him" (where, by the bye, I had never stood!) and it was necessary to sign my name to the certificate of our union, he had not dreamed I was other than the Helena Sutcliffe I announced myself on my arrival at Plas Newydd! He added he should never else have had the presumption to raise his eyes to a young lady so much above him in so many important respects! Above all, in splendour, purity, and antiquity of blood; though he hoped that the great wealth possessed by his own family, and the considerable fortune designed for his immediate use by his father, would protect him from any suspicion of mercenary views in forming the alliance!

My husband therefore ventured, he said, to hope that his earnest overtures for a reconciliation might meet with a favourable acceptance. And he proceeded to propose terms even of a degrading humility and submission, I thought, anxious as I had become to bring about such a result! He himself—he stated—was a far different man from his father! Their notions, on almost all points, social and political, were opposed! He had the highest reverence for the present constitution of things in free and happy Britain,

Digitized by Google

and was entirely hostile to any further concession to the levelling doctrines of the age, falsely styled reformatory! On the recently risen question of an *agrarian confiscation*, denominated by the popular agitators a "Repeal of the Corn Laws,"—his principles were decidedly conservative! He hoped, indeed, that on no political point should he have the misfortune to be found at variance with my father! Could it happen so, he should have so much diffidence of his own judgment, in opposition to one so superior, that he should be afraid to act upon it! His father had promised to resign his seat in parliament, which, if Lord Mauleverer kindly united his interest to that of his own family, would be secured to himself beyond competition. And in parliament he should have no object but to assist, in the best manner his limited abilities permitted, in carrying out my father's political views, and in thus endeavouring to repair, as much as was *now* possible, the great injury to the country which his own father's "untoward success during the Reform Mania," had inflicted on it, by depriving it of Lord Mauleverer's services, at a time when his great talents might have been of most value and efficiency in arresting the in-

Digitized by Google

creasingly threatening movement of revolutionary advance!

There was nothing, in fact, my husband declared, he was not willing to do, to obtain pardon for his inadvertent offence, and a gleam of encouraging favour for the future!

Farther to demonstrate his entire disinterestedness, he proposed to settle upon me, as a jointure, the considerable fortune his father was not only willing, but anxious, to endow him with at once. Moreover, he would, with pleasure, relinquish his own name—which he acknowledged was, for various reasons, one not likely to be pleasing to his lordship—and to assume the family name and arms of his beloved wife!—Much more, of a really very much too humble and cajoling quality was added; and in still worse taste in my opinion, of a sort that seemed to insinuate a feeling of contempt and hostility towards his own father and plebeian relatives in general!

I ventured on some slight remonstrances to this effect—but they were immediately and not exactly for the first time—repelled by Scarlatt, with a degree of petulance and disdain. I had already had occasion to remark how strongly wedded he was

Digitized by Google

to his own opinions, on almost every subject on which he professed to have formed them. But all my reverence for the superiority of intellect and experience I ascribed to him, hardly reconciled me to this epistle. I thought it probable my father would despise a submission so abject, and would in no wise be conciliated towards the offerer by the adulation addressed to his own abilities and influence! But Scarlatt persisted so steadfastly in the opinion that he had written the very perfection of a reconciling overture, that I ended by believing so myself. Besides, it had been already sometime evident to me that my husband had no respect for female wisdom in general, and considered my opinions, in particular, deprived of weight by "my total inexperience of mankind and the world!"

This humble petition, rather than epistle, was accordingly despatched—and the only reply it elicited was in the text-hand of a lawyer, signed by the three names of an eminent solicitor's firm.

This document informed "the person signing himself Scarlatt Suett," with business-like directness, that his communication had been received by the Right Honourable the Lord

Digitized by Google

Mauleverer, who had thereupon desired Messrs. Sharples, Staples, and Stopples, to inform the "person signing himself Scarlatt Suett,"—Firstly, that his Lordship was not acquainted with any one of the names, and declined all intercourse, by letter or otherwise, with an individual who was, and should continue, to the last hour of his Lordship's life, so far as was in his power, a perfect stranger to him. Secondly, that if "the person signing himself Scarlatt Suett" was one of that name who had rendered himself criminally liable to the laws of his country, had he not fled from their jurisdiction, Lord Mauleverer recommended, as the only reparation in his power, that he should lose no time in returning to some portion of the territory of Great Britain, and submit himself forthwith to their legitimate action, Messrs. Sharples, Staples, and Stopples having received his Lordship's commands to institute judicial proceedings for the abduction of the Honourable Hugh-Helena Pomeroy, whom "the person signing himself Scarlatt Suett" falsely styled his wife, the instant he set foot on any portion of the British soil.

Thirdly, with regard to the extraordinary proposals "the person signing himself Scarlatt

Digitized by Google

Suett" had ventured to make to the Right Honourable the Lord Mauleverer, his Lordship desired Messrs. Sharples, Staples, and Stopples, to express his hope, that notwithstanding the loss possibly sustained by his own unavoidable absence from a post of defence to those principles of order and legitimacy he had always professed, his Lordship trusted that what remained of precious and valuable in the British constitution might be preserved without the aid of renegades and deserters from the cause of democracy and revolution! His Lordship also hoped that, on a future occasion, he should be enabled to prevent "the person signing himself Scarlatt Suett" from having it in his power to make a traffic of the position conferred by any constituency, however misled, and the exposition of his intentions, under his own hand and seal, would probably be sufficient to save that of his Lordship's native county from the disgrace of being longer huckstered and bargained for by the Suett family in general, or in particular! His Lordship's interest, meanwhile, he must beg leave to say, it was his intention to devote entirely to the service of another candidate, whom he trusted to induce to undertake the contest as soon as

Digitized by Google

circumstances would permit; and he could not but think that years of the disgrace and humiliation of a Suett's representation of his own interest in their name in parliament, would prepare the constituency in question to welcome a gentleman of the ancient blood and familiar designation of Ap Howel in preference, to represent themselves!

As to "the person signing himself Scarlatt Suett" proffering to settle his fortune on the misguided young lady whom he falsely and illegally styled his wife, Lord Mauleverer had no opinion to give on the subject. It was of course entirely at the pleasure of any man to deal with his property as he thought fit! *It was otherwise with women* — for which reason his Lordship had constituted his daughter a ward of chancery, and had taken all the precautions in his power to protect her from the rapacity of the conspirators who had ensnared her! But his Lordship was of opinion that "the person signing himself Scarlatt Suett" had better, in the first instance, ascertain whether he had any property to dispose of? His Lordship had received the opinion of three of the most eminent counsel in the country, that there was a flaw in the usurped

Digitized by Google

title of the Suetts to the great source of their riches, which he trusted would, in a short period, be submitted for adjudication; when it might possibly be held that the consent of the heir of an entail in perpetuity, under the circumstances, of the Ap Howel property, was necessary to give validity to the nefarious cozenage which had placed a company of London tradesmen in the possession of the estates of an ancient Welsh family!

The effect of this reply on my husband may be imagined. It was no doubt sufficient to exasperate the temper of any man. But I think he had no cause to turn the revengeful bitterness of his feelings upon me! Yet Scarlatt addressed his denunciation of the pride and insolence of the English oligarchy so plainly to me, that I could not be mistaken in feeling myself grievously hurt and insulted.

It was the first time he had spoken to me, his bride of two months, with aught but the language of an almost idolatrous tenderness! It affected me accordingly. I left his presence in a fit of the most violent grief and indignation, and secluded myself in my own chamber, which I refused to open at his entreaties for a long time.

Digitized by Google

But Scarlatt had speedily changed his note. I was still, and for a long time after, essential to his ambition, if not to his love! He addressed to me such fond implorings for pardon—such assurances of his unabated affection—such apologies for the irritation he had laboured under and exhibited—that at last I yielded, and our tearful reconciliation re-established us in even more tender relations with each other than previously.

Scarlatt, I found, quickly persuaded himself that the letter he had received was chiefly the work of the lawyers who penned it, anxious for their own advantages in blowing the embers between two wealthy families. For my part, I plainly discerned my father's own ideas, and even turns of ironical expression, jutting out in all directions through the stiff legal phraseology employed. But unwilling to hazard another disagreement—the first had been very dreadful to me!—had cost me an infinitude of tears and regrets!—I made no attempt to dissuade Scarlatt from renewing his amicable overtures to Lord Mauleverer, complaining respectfully of the unkind tone in which his remonstrances had been received, and begging a reconsideration of his

Digitized by Google

proffers. And he was now enabled to add—in the name of a yet unborn pledge of the happiness of his union with his beloved wife and Lord Mauleverer's daughter!—The reply to this was also from Messrs. Sharples, Staples, and Stopples, enclosing my husband's, unopened, and informing him that they were instructed, the Right Honourable the Lord Mauleverer declined all further communication with the "person signing himself Scarlatt Suett, saving in the presence of the justice of his country!"

Meanwhile I had made a failure, though not quite so complete, on my own part! I wrote to my mother a true unvarnished account, so far as I understood the circumstances myself, and as they did not clash with Scarlatt's previous narrative, of the circumstances of my attachment and union with him, I declared I left Mauleverer with the sole view and purpose of escaping from the intolerable tyranny of Madame Le Crampon; that my husband, Sophia Sutcliffe, and the whole Suett family, were entirely guiltless of any design to entrap me. I avowed the warm attachment we had mutually conceived, and my firm assurance of Scarlatt's ignorance of my real name and position, until he had irrevo-

Digitized by Google

cably engaged himself to me, with the utmost purity of disinterested attachment! These were the sole causes of the rash step we had taken:—pardon for which I implored of my mother with all the earnestness and fervour my really sincere love for herself, and desire to retrieve my position could inspire.

I would not, in my turn, suffer any of Scarlatt's improvements in my epistle! They were matters of form and phraseology certainly—but I thought they marred the genuine tone of the composition. We had a little discussion again—and Scarlatt perhaps began to understand that I had some will and determination of my own, or considered his hour of supremacy had not arrived—for he soon desisted from his corrections.

I received a reply to this letter, hurried and short, evidently written by stealth, and with an agitated hand! In fact, the writer confessed so much—and that she replied at all against the absolute prohibition of her lord! She blamed me—but gently, and with motherly forbearance; and there was a touch of indescribably pathetic allusion to her own harsh fate in the words—"But if you love the man you have chosen, so

Digitized by Google

deeply and unalterably as you avow, I cannot condemn you to have chosen rather to be happy with him in exile and adversity, than miserable with all that the world affords with one whom you might find too late you could not love!" But at the same time the poor lady declared she could never again receive any communication from me until her lord and my father's heart was more softened towards a reconciliation than it was possible yet to hope! For which happy object any influence she possessed, or might venture to use, should not be wanting! At least she could always afford her prayers—for God would pardon a woman's disobedience to her husband, so far as to permit her to supplicate Him to restore her family to peace, and an only child to the arms of a desolate and broken-hearted mother, who could scarcely hope to survive to witness this blessed result, if it was long deferred!

The iron had entered my poor mother's soul! She was the very slave now, the relentless despotism of my father's character and system had been directed so many years to produce!

Our hopes were now turned altogether towards an event which it seemed probable, towards the

Digitized by Google

end of the first year of our marriage, would cement indissolubly the union between my husband and myself. His own impatient eagerness was the chief cause of the failure of his expectations. He removed me by too rapid journeys to the coast of France, before my confinement, anxious to lose no time afterwards in returning to England. He imagined my father's hostility would inevitably yield after such an event, and that he could not persevere in his projects of bringing disgrace and chastisement on the progenitor of a race that must interest his own blood. My firstborn perished in its earliest hour of existence—and it was two years later before the birth of a second, and my slow recovery from a descent to the very gates of death to bring his young, ill-starred life to the day, gave us the encouragement we needed to venture home.

My poor, poor child!—we called our son, and had it conspicuously proclaimed, by all the means we could contrive to bring it to his grandfather's notice, after Lord Mauleverer's own names—Herbert Loftus Pomeroy! And glad would my husband have been if we could have omitted the Suett from our own designation. But that could

Digitized by Google

not be; and I confess I myself could very well understand Scarlatt's fretful impatience and disdain of his patronymic! We neither of us had the philosophy to consider, at this time, that the man makes the name—not the name the man.

Much had happened to affect our fortunes during this long interval. I corresponded very constantly with Mrs. Luxmoor, as I may now more properly style Sophia Sutcliffe, who kept me informed upon all events in England, of private interest, that came to her knowledge. And Scarlatt and his mother kept up quite as faithful an exchange of intelligence, though the former did not so habitually permit my perusal of his correspondence as I did his of mine.

The Luxmoors' circumstances had undergone an immense improvement. The aged incumbent of the Ap Howel living had died off, and agreeably, no doubt, to previous promise, the elder Suett exercised his powers as guardian of young Sir Vivian, to confer it upon the Reverend Carolus. And this in spite of very vehement remonstrances on the part of the minor patron himself, who carried his opposition so far as to declare that he would divulge certain particulars

Digitized by Google

of the man's conduct, publicly, if the design were persisted in, which would prevent any bishop from ever inducting him. Sophia made a trial of my friendship for her, by writing to beg me to use my influence with Sir Vivian, which she seemed to think still very powerful, "to remove his unhappy prejudices" against her husband. And though I was myself strongly disinclined to essay it, from motives the reader will divine, and which my enlarging experience suggested, Scarlatt joined so earnestly in the request that I would do what I could to serve his tutor, and write in his behalf to the "savage young cur" to get him off the poor man's heels, that I should not have known how to refuse, had I even not been inclined to serve my friend at a more severe personal sacrifice.

I wrote, accordingly, to Sir Vivian; and, though his reply did not exceed, by a word, the briefest form of a polite assent, I could not but perceive the tone of regret and reluctance pervading it. Yet, remembering the nervous tremours to which his early youth was subject, I did not think it strange that even these few lines had a wavering and hesitation scarcely to

Digitized by Google

be imputed merely to his dislike of my candidate, visible in every stroke.

And thus the Reverend Carolus Luxmoor was inducted, without further opposition, into the valuable living of Llan-howel cum Pomeroy, in which benefice his conduct did so little credit to the recommendation of his friends, and so much to the besotted perversity and wickedness of his own character.

The elder Suett, indeed, made it a pretence for his gift that he had effected a private stipulation with Luxmoor to resign the living whenever he was called upon—whenever, as was likely enough to happen, the obstinate young patron should see through his folly, and be inclined to resume the excellent provision he now so foolishly threw away.

But, from all we heard, it was more than ever unlikely Sir Vivian should ever claim the observance of this unlawful contract. He was still bent on the profession of a soldier. He had submitted to a severe operation to remove a disqualification in his lame foot, which had perfectly succeeded. And the only studies to which he would submit were such as conduced

Digitized by Google

to the object he had in view. Towards the end of our three years of exile, we heard that he had been pronounced duly qualified for the service, according to the slight scrutiny then required, and that his name was down for the first opening in a regiment of his choice, chiefly raised in the principality, and taking thence its name.

Sophia, who furnished us with these details, seemed to have forgotten all her old dislike of Sir Vivian. She testified often now, on the contrary, to the young man's possession of brilliant and commanding talents, which she thought it a pity should be wasted in the lounging life of an English officer, at that period of general and profound peace. After she had obtained the living for her husband, there seemed reason for the constancy and warmth of these panegyrics. But she dwelt upon the high and generous traits of young Ap Howel's character so perseveringly, that Scarlatt declared himself weary of the subject, and uttered an impatient pshaw whenever it turned up in my friend's letters.

In general the tone of Mrs. Luxmoor's communications appeared to give him satisfaction.

Digitized by Google

Their style was, indeed, remarkably good—flowing, natural, abounding in keen observation, and frequently brilliant and epigrammatic in expression. He always professed himself greatly attached to his jovial ex-tutor, and Sophia's constantly affectionate and admiring allusions to him, he declared gave him much pleasure. It was the best proof of their perfect reconciliation, and of Luxmoor's good and steady demeanour! In fact Sophia's jealousy and conceit had always singularly exaggerated what was blameable in his conduct! Scarlatt thought it was probably enough more her own caprice and inconstancy than Luxmoor's illtreatment, that had induced her to elope from him at Cambridge! He was glad, very glad, that her eyes were now opened to her husband's superiority! — Indeed she seemed now as much to err in a contrary extreme! But it was the way with women! They knew no medium.

I myself noticed that Sophia's eulogiums chiefly ran on the intellectual qualities of Luxmoor; the excellence of his sermons, the reception his conversational powers had secured him among the principal society in their neighbourhood. She alluded sometimes to his popularity

Digitized by Google

in his parish. Very little was said of any improvement in his morals or conduct! But as Sophia alluded to no causes of unhappiness as continuing to exist between them, I hoped the best, and refrained from inquiries that might revive, needlessly, painful recollections.

By Scarlatt our three years of exile were passed with infinite begrudging. He regretted them as so much time lost to his ambitious hopes and purposes of self-elevation. And at last I shared in his impatience not inconsiderably. My ideas were too little expanded to comprehend the littleness of an ambition whose sovereign aim was not the good and advancement of mankind, or of one's own country, but a peerage for one's self! This was Scarlatt's—who regarded his alliance with me as a stepping-stone to that great object, but not as a realization! He wanted to be a lord himself—and was not at all contented with the prospect of being some day the husband of a peeress in her own right! But at a distance from all the centres of political action and influence, what could he do to forward his plans?—He certainly studied books of statistics and of political economy very hard!

Meanwhile I was enabled to gratify one of the

Digitized by Google

most eager longings of my youth, my father's resolute denial of which had been a motive in my revolt against his authority. I visited the most famous scenes and capitals in Europe in the society of my young bridegroom-husband. We made the tour of France, Switzerland, Italy, and visited most of the principal cities of Germany, distributing our three years pretty fairly among them. We made the longest stay at Genoa, where my poor darling, Herbert Loftus, was born. And from Genoa we took ship directly home, when we had finally made up our resolution to venture all, and return thither.

Even had we not possessed this little hostage of safety, the motives for our return had grown so powerful as to overcome any hesitation the inveterate exasperation of my father might have occasioned. The Corn-Law agitation had at last reached its culminating point, and a dissolution of parliament, to test the popular determination, was immediately expected. Scarlatt was now firmly persuaded that his hour of political emergence was at hand! He had, indeed, a notion that he was destined to make a great figure in the approaching struggle. The adulation to which he had been exposed from child-

Digitized by Google

hood, had puffed him up with very extraordinary notions of his own powers! He conceived that it was given to him to stand in the gap between the English people and the aristocracy; to stay the raging onslaught of the popular resolve, and rebuke the maddening waves back into their depths! And he had the Quixotic fancy that his achievements in defence of my father's order would be such as to compel his gratitude and acknowledgment of his merits! Confidence and favour would follow.

I also had begun to grow very weary of foreign sounds, and scenes, and visages. The recollections of my early youth often returned upon me in new and more attractive forms. Since I was myself a mother, I comprehended the anguish and wrong I had inflicted on my own parents in depriving them of their child! Above all, the image of my gentle, suffering, uncomplaining mother often recurred to me, with quickening starts of remorse at the conviction of how much my desertion must have added to her life-long silent woe! Amidst the most gorgeous and diversified landscapes of the famous countries we traversed, my heart often returned with strange yearnings to my obscure

Digitized by Google

native valleys. I wanted to see Mauleverer again at last! After all, it was my home—the home of my childhood!—Very homesick indeed we both were at last; and when our child was born, our doting love and admiration for the splendid little stranger made us conclude at once it was impossible my father's anger could survive the pleading of so dear and irresistible a claim on forgiveness!

The news of my grandmother's death, which reached us about the time I was recovering from my confinement, seemed so visibly to better our chances, that we determined no longer to hesitate. The repeated and, truth to say, violent and abusive assurances of the elder Suett, that Lord Mauleverer's exasperation continued unabated, and that he would resort to every means of revenge, no longer deterred Scarlatt. In reality, he had a conviction that his father purposely exaggerated in these statements, in order to prolong his son's absence from England until the danger of being called upon to fulfil his own promises, in the resignation of his seat in parliament, should pass over.

We landed at Milford Haven, and thence proceeded at once into Glamorganshire.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER III.

HOME.

It was not very wisely done, but Mrs. Suett, who happened to be in supreme authority at Plas Newydd at the time, determined to announce our return as a public event, by a grand *fête*. Her husband was in close and, for him, very unusual attendance on the moribund parliament in London.

The whole county rang, for weeks after, with the details of the "splendid old English hospitality" at Plas Newydd, given to celebrate the return of its "eldest son and his highborn bride to the paternal roof!" There was a general holiday at the mines—oxen roasted whole, puncheons of ale and stronger liquors set abroach; music,

Digitized by Google

shouting, feasting, firing; and my husband made a speech, returning thanks for our reception, in the midst of an applause from the already half-drunken multitude, that scarcely allowed a dozen of his words to be audible, but "gave the world assurance" of a popular speaker in three or four columns of the weekly county newspapers, devoted to what was then supposed to be his party in politics. But, unhappily, these same journals took the opportunity to introduce some hearty abuse of my father's implacable pride and resentment, that gave him a hint, he was never slow to take, of what the *world*—an abstraction before which his whole existence lay prostrate—expected him to do!

I could not, at first, discover much of visible change at Plas Newydd. Everything was still bright and gorgeous in the decorations. Mrs. Suett was still the same cheerful, good-looking, universally active mistress of a family she had been. She received me with really superfluous marks of affection and homage; loaded me with caresses and honors! As for my child, she literally adored it! Her own she could never have treated with so much respect mingled with the fondness she lavished on my little Herber t!

Digitized by Google

He was to her a prince as well as a grandson! She won my heart inexpressibly by her devotion to my child! Her h's mute or aspirated in the wrong places, were thenceforth nothing to me. I looked upon her as half the mother of my darling, and loved her in him!

My first impression of anything disagreeable, on my return, was derived from the fact that, to my very great surprise and discomfort, I found Madame Le Crampon installed at Plas Newydd as *gouvernante* of Bronwen Suett! This circumstance had never once been mentioned in all the letters I had seen thence; nor had Sophia alluded to it! The latter was, however, less singular, as, according to her account, she very rarely made even a ceremonious call on her former mistress. Mrs. Suett, it appeared, could not forget that they had once stood to one another in the relation of employer and employed, and had treated her with such coldness and distance, on these few occasions, as to discourage any advances towards intimacy.

I must confess I found Madame Le Crampon in a very forgiving humor, and willing to overlook any cause of displeasure I might have given her! I believe she would gladly have kissed me

Digitized by Google

once more! But I suffered no approach to cordiality between us; and I almost thought my child's rosy cheek had lost in sweetness and freshness after she had pressed it. Madame had made a good exchange. Bronwen was an infinitely more docile pupil than ever I could have been, and the Parisienne had established a species of supremacy at Plas Newydd, that suited her much better than her strictly assigned position at Mauleverer Castle. In her quality of *ci-devant* Marchioness—*marquise*, at all events—for so she now announced herself, I found, despoiled by half-a-dozen revolutions!—of a personage thoroughly conversant with the most refined and Parisian manners; a familiar friend of the fallen Royal Family of France, and endowed with the inestimable advantage of being unable to speak intelligible English—Madame Le Crampon had not found it difficult to establish herself in a position of influence at Plas Newydd. But chance alone, Mrs. Suett rather blushingly assured me, brought about the arrangement. She had forgotten the name of my disliked governess, and until I recognised her, thought she had "picked up a perfect stranger," with the assistance of a London scholastic agent!

Digitized by Google

Bronwen I found the natural product of the Frenchwoman's absurdly forcing and artificial system of education. She was now in her fourteenth year; but she had all the manners and formality of a dowager countess of fifty! Nothing of the vivacity and impulse of youth! She never spoke but when she was spoken to: she answered you with every propriety of address, but entirely without animation or naturalness—almost without vitality. You looked at her with a misgiving that she might be some skilfully contrived specimen of automaton work! She uttered no idea that was her own: indeed she had no ideas but such as her governess dictated, and her classbooks had put into her head, with as much rational meaning and effect as a lot of rootless flowers in a garden bed, of germinative or reproductive power! Madame Le Crampon was the absolute ruler of this machine;—her mother had ceased to hold almost any relation to it! She had abdicated in favour of that hard and implacable usurpress.

Bronwen still continued very pretty; her features had still their waxen purity and delicacy of finish: she had the complexion of a new-blown rose! Her timidity was excessive. She trem-

Digitized by Google

bled and blushed if you addressed the commonest observation to her.

Poor girl! what a mechanical toy had Madame Le Crampon's system manufactured her into! Not only all her actions, but all her thoughts, the simplest movements of her young heart, had been regulated like those of a chronometer! It saddened me to see a human creature, in whose veins the warm blood of childhood was flowing, subjected to such minute cruelty of regulation and repression! As if one free thought, one unbidden throb of the natural heart, were an offence against the God of nature!

In her joy to see me, the poor child, however, evinced she had not altogether forgotten she was fashioned of human stuff. As for her young brothers, the twins, whom Sophia was wont to call the Suett Dumplings, I found they were much grown, but as worthy as ever of the designation. They also were under suitable tutelage. Dr. Stillcoke, Scarlatt's former tutor, who had been ousted in favour of Luxmoor, was reinstated in office with them. Mrs. Suett had arrived at the conviction that she had not greatly bettered things in choosing so much more fashionable and lively an instructor. The conviction being thrust

Digitized by Google

upon her in the shape of Scarlatt's enormous college bills, which during our absence had accumulated against him at Plas Newydd. To such an extent, in fact, that his father, irritated at the discovery, and aware that his son was out of his creditors' reach, had flatly refused to pay a single stiver on any of them.

This was one of the subjects of uneasiness we had to consider immediately on our return. But there were others. A perfectly new view of the interior politics of Plas Newydd was presented to me on the very evening after the close of the day's riotous revel of welcome! I had become *one of the family!* It seemed to be thought no longer necessary to conceal the true state of the domestic relations from me.

In the first place, besides the elder Suett's exasperation at the heavy debts his son had left unpaid in England on our flight, another element of discord seemed likely to rise into flames between them! John Thomas, it appeared, if ever he had been sincere in promising to relinquish public life in favour of his son, had now entirely changed his mind. He had come to the conclusion that the failure in his own and family's expectations of procuring a baronetcy, arose from

Digitized by Google

his having "played his game in parliament the wrong way!" It was not by evincing subserviency and adherence to a ministry on all occasions, that you induced it to comply with your expectations in return. It was by frightening, by "bullying the people in power," in John Thomas's own phrase—that you could make certain of your object. Once get them afraid of you, and they give you what you want. He had been driving on the wrong tack always hitherto; but he would now "start on the independent dodge!" He would let them see! And, accordingly, he had gone to London, to oppose his old whig friends, tooth and nail, on a question comfortably apart from the popular one of the day, but on which their existence as a ministry was supposed to be at stake. According to Mrs. Suett, he expected the reward of this conduct in the new parliament likely to be speedily summoned, and meanwhile "laid himself out extensively" to conciliate his considerably alienated constituency, and she was certain had not the slightest idea of giving up his chances of re-election in favour of any one.

Scarlatt's irritation at this announcement was excessive. He railed openly against his father

Digitized by Google

as "an old humbug;" and so possessed was he with his own favourite notions, that he declared he would set up against him, if he could bring about a reconciliation with "the Castle." So he always spoke of my family—and he seemed to have little doubt that this happy result was at hand. He would then present himself to the county, on the conservative interest; and backed by his father-in-law's, he had not the least doubt he should distance all competition. *His* interests, he rather pompously declared, were now far more with the landed than with the commercial and manufacturing portion of the nation. He was for preserving the Corn Laws in all their integrity, and would take an early opportunity of satisfying Lord Mauleverer, and the country gentlemen in general, of his opinions on the subject. He was certain now, he said, that his father's accounts of the continued exasperation of feeling at "the Castle," were purposely exaggerated to keep him abroad, out of the way. And that was why he supplied us with money so liberally for our travels, while he allowed him to fall into disrepute at home, by refusing all payment of his just debts. But the "old boy" would find the ruse a failure now, and a much worse one soon.

Digitized by Google

There seemed some reason, certainly, in another piece of bad news his mother communicated, for Scarlatt to desire his fortunes not to be identified with the prosperity of the commercial world. Within a few days before our return, Mr. Suett had received a letter from Sir Vivian Ap Howel, to state that, before he joined his regiment, which was shortly to embark for India, he requested to have an interview with him, in the presence of witnesses, on matters relating to the Mynydd Howel estate. Lord Mauleverer, with whom he continued on terms of the most suspicious intimacy, was to be one of these witnesses. And from all Mrs. Suett and her husband could gather, it was the intention of the young baronet to enter a formal protest against the legality of the act which had transferred the property in the wealthy Howel mines from his family to the Suetts, and the company they represented.

Something hostile was certainly intended, for Sir Vivian declined to stay at Plas Newydd in this ominous visit, and had ordered an apartment to be prepared for him in his own old ruin of a castle, where he had already located "a miserable old fellow who played the harp, and had gone blind, with his two old grisly hags of daughters!"

Digitized by Google

I confess it was not without some painful emotion, that I heard Mrs. Suett add ingenuously, "And in case of a lawsuit, God only knows how it will go with us! Our own lawyers look blue over it; for they say Sir Vivian's father ought to have signed the deed too, which he always stood out in India he would not, and went through any poverty, rather than consent. There's a screw loose in our case, you may depend upon it, Scarlatt, by your father's anxiety! We shall have a world of trouble, anyhow, and I am sure your father's temper needs no more souring! His very look already is enough to curdle all the dairies round about for miles! And that's why I am so pleased now, with always having behaved so kind to the poor young fellow, when he was left an orphan, and bringing him up as much as I could with Bronwen! For, if he would only fall in love with her now she is woman-grown almost, and take her fortune as a set-off for what he thinks we may owe him, all would be right again!"

My husband replied with a deep execration—an unusual thing with him! What he said, indeed, implied a really startling vehemence of hostile feeling against Ap Howel, and the more

Digitized by Google

so, as I had rarely heard him allude to him in any manner since the scene of the pistols at the Kerig y Drudion.

"'The poor young fellow' *be blasted!* If I have a word to say in the matter, he sha'nt have Bronwen, nor a single penny of ours, with or without her! Why, mother, what can he do without money in a suit against us, in chancery? And if he had plenty, possession is nine-tenths of the law; and I would engage to hold the Mynydd Howel, in chancery, to all eternity, if he had ten thousand times a better right than the best!"

I was shocked at the open and extreme injustice of this language.

"Well, it does seem strange! After the mountain had fallen in on the mines for more than fifty years!" sighed Mrs. Suett. "Still, I own I am all for conciliation! I liked the poor lad always well enough himself—and then the people about here consider him the rightful owner, and will, to the end of time!"

"He may not last so long himself, mother! Let us hope he may get his brains—if he has any—knocked out with a cannon-ball, or a Burmese mace, before we are troubled with him

Digitized by Google

much more!" replied my husband; adding vindictively, "I am very glad he has the prudence not to take up his quarters at Plas Newydd, while I am here! I owe him the chastisement of a good deal of bygone impertinence, and I doubt if I should be able to restrain my temper after this indication of his malice; and in that case, I should use very little ceremony in clearing the house of him, and all his ancestral honors, at the point of my boot!"

How was it that the scene of the Kerig y Drudion returned with such force and distinctness upon my mind, as I listened to this outbreak?

* * * *

One of my most pleasing anticipations—perhaps the most pleasing—on my return to England—was that of being reunited to my friend Sophia. Llanhowel Rectory, which she now inhabited with her husband, was distant certainly about five miles from Plas Newydd. But I looked upon such a space as constituting hardly any obstacle to a renewal of all our intimacy.

The very morning after our arrival at Plas Newydd, I determined to drive over to Llanhowel Rectory, and surprise my beloved friend with the

Digitized by Google

news of my return in person. I longed to present my little darling to her. I had all along felt that my happiness in the possession of this exquisite little treasure of beauty and innocence would never be complete, until Sophia shared it with me.

Every shade of umbrage, with regard to the former relations between my husband and Sophia, had long since entirely vanished from my mind. I supposed, indeed, that Scarlatt would derive as much harmless satisfaction from the renewal of our intimacy as myself. I was, therefore, considerably vexed and surprised, when, on requesting him, before he went down, to bear me company, after breakfast, to Llanhowel, he inquired —and I think, without any affectation of ignorance —what on earth I wanted to do at Llanhowel? I laughed—and perhaps I coloured a little as I reminded him that our friends, the Luxmoors, resided there. "Ah, so they do," he replied, as if he had forgotten all about them, and they were suddenly recalled to his recollection. "And I should like to see *Luxmoor!*—he might be of some help to me! You may invite him to come over and talk with me, but I sha'n't be able to go out this morning—nor for a week or a fortnight

Digitized by Google

to come—on mere visits! I shall be very busy looking after my prospects for parliament, and seeing what can be done about a reconciliation with the Castle!—Yes, you can invite Luxmoor up, but—what was I saying about visits?—I don't want you to get on visiting terms with his wife! *She don't exactly mix in our circle, you know!*—at least the one we intend to move in! —and having been only a governess here, she is scarcely the kind of person I should like you to associate with!"

I really was surprised—but I was not gratified: I was even hurt by this tone of neglect and disdain towards my own dearest and most cherished friend. "I do not see," I said, pettishly, "that I am likely to have so very numerous and agreeable a society at Plas Newydd, that I should wilfully deprive myself of that of the only clever and amusing person I know about here, merely because she has once been a governess!"

This was rather too hard a hit. The Suetts had but a scanty roll of visitors, for those whom they wished to visit would not visit them, and they gave no encouragement to others of inferior station, who would have been glad enough, no doubt, to pay court to such rich people.

Digitized by Google

Scarlatt replied with sharpness, "You can do as you like, of course, my love! Your receiving Mrs. Luxmoor will merely look like a renewal of kind patronage. It would be different, of course, if *I* associated with her, on seeming terms of equality! I must, therefore, decline *in toto!*"

Nor do I deem this scornful indifference in the least put on! Scarlatt, absorbed in his projects of ambition, and resolution to make his way into the highest spheres of society, was probably quite in earnest in it!

But his mother appeared to be still more disinclined to my intention, which I announced at breakfast, asking her for a carriage to convey myself, baby, and nurse, over to Llanhowel. "Nay, come, my dear!" (she loved to display a good deal of familiarity with me now) "the woman there's no company for you! What do you want looking *her* up again? I am sure she has been amply repaid for any services she ever rendered you and your 'usband! She and her 'usband, too! Take my advice, and let her drop! We've all had enough of her!"

"Why, Mrs. Suett, what can you mean? Do you wish to insinuate that I ought to be so ridi-

Digitized by Google

culous and absurd as to be *jealous* of Mrs. Luxmoor, on account of that foolish nonsense years ago? And even then it was altogether a misapprehension!"

Scarlatt was present, and he coloured up angrily. "Yes! she had the infernal impudence to make me her screen, as she thought, with Luxmoor!" he said, in a tone of excessive pique. "Well, I hope she enjoys her position at present with him!—How is Luxmoor going on, mother? Do you ever hear?"

"Like Old Nick himself!—And yet they say he does a wonderful deal of good, too! I can hardly tell, sometimes, what to make of all I hear. But if ever there were two sides to a story, there is to the Luxmoors'!" said Mrs. Suett, with a very puzzled expression. "Why, some people tell me that he actually *beats* his wife every now and then! And she herself declares no husband could possibly behave better to a woman! She knows best, of course. But then she says he hardly ever gets the worse for liquor now—whereas, I hear, often and often, that he is even at times all but drunk when he goes into the pulpit. There are lots of lies told about the Luxmoors on one side or other, that's certain

Digitized by Google

But as to my thinking for one moment, you could be jealous of an ugly, stuck-up-nosed creature like Sophia!—though I used sometimes to think she is not so ugly as she gives herself out!—such a thought never once entered into my head!"

"I assure you I am not jealous of her, Mrs. Suett," I replied, with great tranquillity, "and to prove it, I intend to enjoy as much of her society as I possibly can, while we remain at Plas Newydd, if you do not forbid me to make my friends welcome under your roof!"

"If you could only hear what Madame Le Crampon says of her!—I mean, I really have no objections to make, in that case," Mrs. Suett replied, cutting herself short, but evidently not much pleased. "*I* only say there is too much of the cat and the cream about her ways of going on, to make me very anxious to see her again in my pantry! Why, even my own husband, John Thomas—I do believe she was quite making up to him at one time, only he was made of too tough material!"

I could not help breaking into a laugh at this observation, and after some slight reflection, Mrs. Suett joined me heartily in the demonstration.

Digitized by Google

But Scarlatt said peevishly, "I can quite believe it of her! Mrs. Luxmoor is a perfect coquette, and not at all a good associate for you, Helena," and he left the room.

I persisted nevertheless, seeing no good reason why I should abandon my friend, in any assigned; and it was arranged I was to be driven over to Llanhowel with a pair of ponies Mrs. Suett kept for her own use. I refused the great state family coach, with the four "spanking greys," as Mrs. Suett called them, resolutely.

I reached Llanhowel about noon on a wintry-looking spring day, leaving the hills behind me fantastically decked with wreaths of snow. Llanhowel is a village, or rather a group of farmhouses, connected by some scattered cottages and hovels, skirting a deep hollow glen, about half way between Mauleverer and the Mynydd Howel. I remembered to have avoided it by a considerable circuit on my flight from Madame Le Crampon; and it struck me as very strange that, as I stepped out of Plas Newydd, to return so far on my way, I had politely returned this woman's profound, *ancien régime* curtsey! How marvellously intertwisted are the threads of life! Why need we wonder they are so

Digitized by Google

seldom woven into a web of consistent hues and pattern!

Nearly all the way to Llanhowel I commanded, from my seat in the open chaise, a view of the distant towers of Mauleverer! My mother and my father I knew were there; and often during my journey I felt an inclination to extend it to their abode, and throw myself at their feet for pardon! It would, perhaps, have spared much future suffering and present uneasiness of suspense! But Scarlatt had otherwise determined. He assured me I ran risk of being forcibly detained by my father, and that his main hope of reconciliation lay in observing for a time a policy of "masterly inactivity" (the phrase of the day), and awaiting the good effects of his own appearance as a conservative politician and candidate for our county representation. I was not then aware of it; but my husband had determined to act as if in full reliance on his father's former promises, and to make his pretensions known before John Thomas could arrive to say them nay! Once compromised in this manner, he thought that for very shame's sake his father must withdraw from opposition to his schemes.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IV.

AN INDISSOLUBLE UNION!

I SAW Sophia some time before she could probably have seen me. The village lies at the bottom of the hollow, and was spread like a map at the foot of the steep road that descends to it. There were only two good houses in it: one a large, old, scrambling structure, which my jockey informed me belonged to a Squire Gawker, who was master of the Howel Hunt, and otherwise a most eminent sportsman. The other was the parsonage. This was close on the church—a very ancient little Gothic building, overgrown with ivy to the very top of a disproportionately lofty steeple. The parsonage itself was almost as ancient probably, all on the ground plan and

Digitized by Google

roofed with rushes. Neatly enough, however, and of a size to accommodate a considerable family—always expected in a Welsh cure, of course. The windows were latticed in small diamond panes, set in arched frameworks very deeply in the walls, and in parts prettily overhung with ivy, briar-rose, and a variety of creepers, among which was one whose scarlet leaves had survived the winter, and gave a cheerful, fire-like glow to nearly the whole front. But what chiefly struck me in the scene was the fact that, although the space before the house was evidently a churchyard, from its numerous jutting memorials, it was trimmed and laid out in quite an elegant garden fashion. And along the well-gravelled walk to the house through this, under the shade of the tall yews bordering it, I perceived two figures walking towards the gate. One I did not an instant doubt to be Sophia—the other I could not conclude to be her husband. It was a man about his height, and in clerical black; but much more softly rounded and plump, and besides dressed in knee breeches and buckles — an antiquated clerical style he never affected.

My heart beat quick with joyous expectation.

Digitized by Google

But I was unwilling that any stranger should witness its overflow; and considering, from what I observed, that Sophia was about to dismiss her guest, I ordered the carriage to stop at a little taphouse I perceived in the village, at a stone's throw from the parsonage, but concealed from it by a group of elm pollards. Here I determined to await till the strange visitor passed out. His one-horse brougham, of dark bottle-green, was evidently open in readiness for his arrival.

I could plainly discern from where I sat that Sophia was escorting this personage, whoever he was, with great marks of deferential attention. The personage himself, I could also perceive, seemed at once pleased, flattered, and reluctant, repeatedly pausing, as if to decline further homage, but allowing himself to be led on without much real repugnance; for they arrived together at the gate, laughing and chatting in the most agreeable and amicable manner possible. The guest and hostess took there a very cordial farewell, and Sophia stood holding the gate in her hand until her companion had struggled his corpulent little person, with some visible difficulty, but great pretensions to agility, into the vehicle.

Digitized by Google

"Really, Mrs. Luxmoor," I then distinctly heard him say, in the midst of the village quietness, "you must have some extraordinary spell at command. I had quite forgotten my rheumatism until I ceased to hear you talk!"

"We only required the accusation of witchcraft to complete the absurdity of the charges against us, Mr. Archdeacon!" Sophia replied, in her gayest tones, adding with an arch glance, "But if it be as you are so polite as to say, you can always command the remedy—whenever you please to honour us with your presence! And I regret more than ever, Mr. Luxmoor should have gone on such a long round of sick visitation as not to be at home to have had the pleasure of showing you over his improvements himself. His schools especially! He could have explained the system so much better than I have been able!—But I hope at least I have had the good fortune to convince you of the injustice of the base anonymous communications addressed to my lord the bishop, and that Mr. Luxmoor is doing to the contrary, all the good he possibly can with his limited means (we have no one to help us, you are aware sir, in this out-of-the-way sporting place!) and the obstinacy of the people

Digitized by Google

in sticking to their Welsh prejudices and gibberish!"

"You may be satisfied I shall report most favourably to his lordship, Mrs Luxmoor.—And I believe, meanwhile, I can assure you no further notice will be taken on the subjects I have been obliged to mention to you! Everything I have seen and heard in Llanhowel—above all, your testimony!—is in complete refutation of those vile anonymous slanderers!" was the affable reply.

Sophia smiled with her singularly fascinating mixture of melancholy and gaiety, and waving her hand very gracefully as the carriage drove off, she turned with a suddenly changed and impatient step from the gate, and seemed hurriedly making back to the house. I thought I would give her the full pleasure of a surprise; so, desiring them to let me out of the carriage, I crossed and entered the garden-churchyard, at some little distance behind her.

I was rather pleased, with this plan in view, to perceive that Sophia made towards one of the out-houses—an uninhabited sexton's, or perhaps, merely used for the purpose of stowing away tools and lumber. I followed softly on in her

Digitized by Google

steps, and I saw her enter at a door on the farther side of the little building. I was myself then passing an open wooden shutter set too high to see into the place, but whence any interior sounds were audible. And I was arrested at the spot by hearing Sophia speak, in raised and passionate tones, very different from those dulcet ones so lately on her lips! "Come into the house now, vile drunkard! and get to your bed!—What a morning of lies and tediousness you have cost me!"

"You tell the *lie!* I am not drunk! What do you mean by having me shut up here, you—" and the most degrading of epithets, from man to woman, was applied to Sophia, in the hoarse, tipsy tones of a voice that I instantly recognised to be Luxmoor's!

"Is it your intention to go on like a mad bull, as usual, before the Archdeacon is well out of hearing?" Sophia answered, seemingly too much accustomed to abuse, to be ruffled by the insult. Yet she added, in a low, menacing mutter, that came distinctly to me—"Such a brutish spectacle as you present, Luxmoor! is enough to make any woman—give you cause for the atrocious terms you apply to me!"

Digitized by Google

"I *have* cause!" returned the drunken wretch. "Isn't there that great pile of horseflesh, Gawker, constantly haunting in and out of the house? The devil fetch me, and a side of the house away together, if I stand it all much longer!"

"I do not see the necessity for the devil's taking a side of the house! otherwise I have no objection, personally!" was Sophia's irritating response; and she added in a still bitterer and more stinging manner, "So you are at your old game again, are you? But what sort of damages do you think you could make out of Gawker? A fellow who has ruined himself with dogs as you intend to ruin yourself with—I will not use your word—with *ladies!* For your delightful doings at widow Wrangham's opposite, it seems, have mainly contributed to procure us the honour of the archdeacon's visitation—a visitation indeed it was to me!—And had I shown a particle of natural feeling—of belief in the charge—which I know to be so true!—your seven hundred a year would have gone to the winds—and you ought to have rejoiced if the friend you have mentioned had literally come and carried you off! —without the houseside, however, if possible:

Digitized by Google

that would be a dilapidation in a parsonage which we should have had to make good!"

I heard the words in reply—the brutal, the barbarous words—"I'll give you one for yourself, meantime, madam, you won't find it so easy to repair!" and the sound of a heavy blow, on human flesh—never mistaken!—a suppressed but piercing shriek that went through my heart—But I know not what else happened before I found myself cast between a woman who was bleeding profusely, as it seemed to me, from *the eyes!* and a demon in human form—in the form of Luxmoor!—who held her by the dishevelled hair—and was redoubling blows upon her with his unmanly fist up to the moment when I threw myself between them!

Marvellous, marvellous! I was screaming for help, but Sophia herself—who recognised me at a glance—implored me to be quiet! "It is nothing—it is over—I provoked him too much: he is intoxicated! Do not bring exposure upon us, for God's sake, dear Hugh-Helena! for I see it is you—it must be you or an angel! He is very good when he is sober—and he rarely exceeds now! But—but—I really can hardly see you! Go into the house, Luxmoor,

Digitized by Google

dear, and tell Fanny to bring me a basin of the well water!—I was to blame—I acknowledge it!—Do pray let me alone now for awhile!"

For Luxmoor—transmuted altogether—from the jovial jocund Luxmoor of our wedding tour—continued to glare at his wife with his bloodshot, angry eyes like some insane beast,—keeping his fists clenched as if to renew the onslaught.

"Mr. Luxmour!—You remember me? Pray don't hurt Sophia before me! Oh, pray don't," interceded I, in terror.

"Oh, you're Mrs. Scarlatt Suett, are you?—Honourable Miss Pom—Pom—Pomerilli Raltum, &c., &c., &c., that was?" returned the inebriated brute. "I married you, did'nt I? according to the rights of the ancient Druids—at Gretna Green was it? No, Sark Toll Bar! All reality; no formality!—Well, what came of it all, in the long run? Are you *one of us* at present?—all the honey sucked?—nothing but the sting left? And pray have you found out what a beauty my pupil really is?"

"Take my handkerchief, dear Sophia, and wipe your poor, poor eyes!"

"I sha'nt want the water soon—though this

Digitized by Google

is rather too hot, too!" my unhappy friend said, accepting the offer, and bursting into an hysterical paroxysm of tears and laughter, which she vainly attempted to control, as she staunched those bruised and most precious organs which the monster, her husband, seemed purposely to have aimed at.

"You'll wait long enough for water, hot or cold, if you wait till I send you any! I don't care for you nor your d—d chit-chatty old woman of an archdeacon either! I'll go over at once to widow Wrangham's—and you can send for his Venerableship to keep you company, if you like! I won't come home till morning, I can tell you! Nor even then perhaps; but if I see Gawker, Ill tell him it will be all right and snug, at least till then!"

And the abominable wretch, scarcely able to stagger and reel along, with what he had already imbibed, still shaking his fists in savage defiance at his unfortunate wife, made his way from the out-house, no doubt on the errand he had announced.

"O, Sophia; my poor, poor Sophia; how the monster has hurt you!"

"It don't matter, unless it can be seen very much! Have you anything with you, dear—

Digitized by Google

Eau de Cologne—or anything of that sort? But do look out first and tell me if the archdeacon's carriage is quite out of sight! It would be horrible if he should see Luxmoor in the state he is in—after the fine account I gave him too! He will think me such a liar; and so I am—the worst in creation! But what am I to do? Turn him and myself both out of our only possible honest means of living, now that he has given himself so completely up to the devils that possess him, and which have come into him *out* of the swine! But *honest*! O my God! when we mock God himself hourly, to keep our seven hundred a-year."

Let me abridge this painful scene. It was hours before Sophia and I recovered sufficiently from the shock of the untoward accompaniments of our rejunction to enjoy it. I am not sure, indeed, that Sophia's deep humiliation and vexation at the exposure of her truly miserable matrimonial position, did not rather render it painful to her to the close.

The poor woman had quite reduced it to a system, her efforts to cover the delinquencies of her husband, and put a good face on her own disasters to the world. But after the scene I had witnessed, it was impossible to hide the

Digitized by Google

truth from me: and marbled over as she might be by the stoicism of endurance she had endeavoured to teach herself, Sophia was taken at a moment of weakness, nigh vanquished by calamity, and listening, for the first time for years, to the voice of womanly sympathy and tenderness. I would not, indeed, be denied; I compelled her, by the force of my love and tears, to grant me a confidence so closely locked up against the whole world besides, that few imagined she had any to yield!

She told me all, I think. Luxmoor, always one of the most depraved of men, had found his Capræa in this remote Welsh village, where he indulged in all the worst vices that had previously disgraced his career, in still more unrestrained and merciless excess. I must not stain my pages with the record of his enormities: in one of the frightful legends a mother and her own daughter figured together as objects of his bestial licentiousness! Two women, who kept the tap-house within sight of every window in Llanhowel Parsonage! Yet the unfortunate creature, his wife—induced by what frenzy He only knows, who, surely for better purposes, has implanted in the hearts of women feelings so

Digitized by Google

deep and ineradicable—had literally devoted herself, and all the powers of her ingenious and indefatigable intellect, to the preservation for him of a position Luxmoor ought long previously to have forfeited, or never to have attained. And so well had she succeeded that everywhere opinion was balanced, and the efforts of the reverend wretch's enemies, raised by his own vileness, had hitherto failed to brand him with the condemnation and exposure he so richly merited. The plan she proceeded on itself would not have occurred to any but a woman of great industry and talent. Nearly all the good that he ought, or might have done in his parish, she did, and ascribed to him!

For example, she had organised a most excellent girls' school; not on the principle of fashioning some score of human parrots to repeat certain scientific sounds, but on one of her own, by which, when she explained it, it appeared to me evident she would manufacture domestic servants, or first-rate wives and mistresses of families for the neighbouring peasantry. A constant rotation of these girls in her own house were the only servants she employed, and they there acquired all the domestic knowledge that could be

Digitized by Google

of use to them in service, or in the latter capacities. Yet even this, she whispered me, she ventured upon with fear and trembling; and while she represented Luxmoor everywhere as the benevolent planner and director of this establishment, she dared not trust him alone with her young female pupils in its walls!

Yet Sophia could find apologies for this truly detestable ruffian. It was still the old cry! What could one expect much better from a man of talents so remarkable—of so devouring an activity—condemned to the ennui and unvaried dulness of a country village like Llanhowel? If Luxmoor had been placed in a great town, now, where his conversational powers could have been properly appreciated, and where he could have met with persons his equals in learning and information, it would have been so different! Had he anything of interest to employ his mind in at all, at Llanhowel? He was absolutely incredulous himself in matters of religion, and was perfectly indifferent to its diffusion! Sophia could hardly induce him to deliver the sermons she herself scrawled out for him, often enough, to avoid open censure. Yet in reality he had by nature all the ambition and love of supremacy of a Hil-

Digitized by Google

debrand! And his cruelty to her—I do believe the poor woman occasionally persuaded herself—was only a misdirected effluence of his genius for control and absolute sway!

Surely, had he not been one of the most insatiably craving and dissatisfied of wretches, Luxmoor had no reason to consider himself as ill-treated in the distribution of earthly blessings. His income was ample, even with the deductions made for the consequences of his former extravagance and profligacy. Sophia told me that she had placed all his debts, unknown even to himself, in a systematic course of liquidation, and though they were very heavy; and another drawback lay in the fact that they were obliged to allow "the Cambridge Squaw and her *piccaninnies*," as she called them, an annual sum to keep all quiet there; — a few years she hoped would accomplish the result. It was astonishing, indeed, how quickly, after the disasters I have commemorated, Sophia recovered her natural tone of gaiety and *persiflage*. She was not, however, so much hurt as I had imagined. "*A little blood makes a great show!*" she herself told me, laughingly, when, at her desire, I had procured her some water from a well in

Digitized by Google

the churchyard; and after washing her face, only two light brown discolorations remained round her eyes, which we both thought might easily pass for a slight bilious distemperature, until they changed to their next stage of green and purple!

But looking at her now, I could less than ever account for the infidelity and brutish ill-treatment to which Sophia was so evidently subjected. Her figure seemed to me much improved; it was thinner, perhaps, than of yore, but there was more grace and dignity in its motions than I had been wont formerly to discern. The mystical charm of her countenance was enhanced: that exquisite light, of mind and feeling which she still possessed, shone with yet more play of fascinating variety over her features. She was dressed in exceedingly good taste, though in the most modest of morning costumes—in snowy dimity, without a single ornament, and with a plain straw bonnet trimmed with quakerly simplicity. And the more I conversed with her—now that I was better able to appreciate qualities of the mind—the more I was struck by the visible enlargement of hers, and its rare natural endowment! She

Digitized by Google

explained smilingly, in reply to my compliments, that condemned as she was so much to solitude, by her husband's neglect, she had read more than ever she had read in her life before, and thought she should finally turn out a complete female *bookworm.*

I suggested—No: *an authoress!* I noticed that she slightly coloured when I said so, and looked at me with some eagerness in her expression. "Do you really think I might make my salt by writing?" she said. "I own I am completely tired of *governessing!* But if Luxmoor drives me fairly to despair, it would be delightful not to be obliged to go upon the parish, and *wash paupers' shirts* for an existence!—Writing is hard work, too!—and publishers are the coyest creatures possible to catch, I have heard! Still anything would be better, perhaps, than making a mistake—which I have sometimes been tempted to—and slipping, *accidentally for the purpose,* into that deep, dark well—that goes halfway down to the antipodes—whence you brought me the water!—I shall think of this, my darling pupil!—you teach *me* now!"

It was agreed that I should stay the rest of the day with Sophia—and then, for the first

Digitized by Google

time, I mentioned about my child and the nurse. She expressed all the eagerness I anticipated to see it, and now, having smoothed her hair and visage, insisted on accompanying me to the gate "to receive little Herbert in the arms of his mother's sister-friend!"

Surprised at my protracted absence, my nurse had meanwhile descended from the carriage, and we met her coming up the avenue with her precious charge.

Sophia's glance flashed eagerly on the infant, which was fast asleep; and a paleness, natural to her when deeply moved, came over her countenance. And deeply moved she was!—What else could be the meaning of that strange spasm which for an instant wrenched her features as she gazed upon my child?

"What a beautiful little creature! His mother's features visibly—but his father's complexion! A regular little Christian Cupid, without the wings or the poisoned arrows! Let me have it, nurse! I will not disturb it." And she took the sleeping cherub from the good Fleming's arms, and put her lips so softly and tenderly to its tiny rosy mouth that indeed she did not seem at all to ruffle its repose. "Ah!"

Digitized by Google

she then said, in a low, passionate murmur, rather to herself than to me, "had *he* given me children like this—or even little imps like himself!—I could have been happy with all! But God has denied me even this consolation, for the crime of loving such a wretch!"

It had not occurred to me yet to have made the inquiry—I ought to have known, in fact, that Sophia would have mentioned so noticeable a circumstance in her correspondence. "You have no children then, Sophia?" I inquired vaguely, half lost in the contemplation of my blooming boy. She made me no reply—and the emphatic silence brought me back to recollection.

On the whole, it was a happy day this I spent with Sophia, and it passed with an animation and variety of which I had not a long time had experience, and which renewed with me all the old fascination of her ascendancy.

She was curiously well informed in the gossip of the country-side, and communicated much that was interesting to me, with which the Suetts were not acquainted, or which they had purposely concealed from me.

"My father and mother," Sophia said, "were living on much the same terms as of yore,

Digitized by Google

though it was reported that "that dreadful old Hecate, my grandmother," had made some remorseful admissions to her son, at her death, which should have softened his heart towards her. My mother's health, I was afflicted to learn, was believed to be fast declining, and it was said indeed she was now a confirmed invalid, passing her time almost exclusively in her own apartments, "dying of that slow but certain malady," commented Sophia, feelingly, "when alien natures are irrevocably linked together, and the stronger drags and worries the weaker on with it, till it sinks at last, and perishes, worn out!" How much did I long then for the reconciliation which should give me power to devote myself to console that bruised and trampled heart!

But it was easy to see Sophia entertained very slight hopes that I should ever effect one with my father. She told me what until that moment I had never heard—that Lord Mauleverer had preferred a bill against the elder Suetts, her husband and herself, charging them with a conspiracy in bringing about my marriage with Scarlatt; which the grand jury had ignored at once for want of proof.

She spoke of young Ap Howel, introducing

Digitized by Google

the subject very casually by observing what a favourite he was at Mauleverer Castle, and how useful he might consequently be in promoting the project of a general reconciliation.

"For I am convinced," she said, with her intricate smile, "that you still possess the greatest influence over him! Witness how at a word from you he gave up his opposition to Luxmoor, whom he detests. And you must know that he honours me occasionally with a visit, when he is at Plas Newydd, for no other reason, I am sure, than because he is aware I correspond with you, and can give him tidings of your welfare. Indeed he has never disguised, that was the case! Of course (observing that I coloured) he has outgrown all those silly, boyish fancies of his! and he has often laughed with me himself over his declaration to you, while he was still an Eton second-form—and I never saw anybody so pleased as he was, when I gave him the first news—I had them before Plas Newydd even—of the birth of little Herbert."

"I should not think of asking any more favours of Sir Vivian," I said.

"You would scarcely know him if you saw him again," Sophia resumed. "But I suppose

Digitized by Google

there are chances of a lawsuit which will make him less welcome than ever at Plas Newydd, so you will not be called upon to produce your surprise. His system of sacrificing everything to bodily improvement, has answered wonderfully! He has grown quite a fine young fellow! Too thin and nervy still perhaps; but full of fire, and restless as quicksilver! I daresay he will look extremely well in his uniform—especially when he has covered it with stars, and himself with glory, as I have no doubt he will long before he is an old fogy!—I believe Alexander the Great was not particularly a giant to look at, was he?"

I turned the conversation at once into another channel. I did not well know why, but the praises of this youth, whom I myself so highly esteemed and honoured, harassed me!

I spoke of my husband. I was, in fact, suddenly surprised to remember that Sophia had never made any inquiry about him! Yet there had been time, and a calm enough interval, to notice that he was not with me. We were sitting together at an early tea, to give me time to return to Plas Newydd before dark, and as yet she had not alluded to Scarlatt at all.

Digitized by Google

I mentioned, then, how very much engaged he was, and—rather awkwardly, certainly—introduced his message, wishing Luxmoor to come over and see him at the Plas. "But I shall give such an account of his doings," I said, "that Scarlatt will excuse Mr. Luxmoor's taking the trouble, no doubt!"

"You do not then expect Mr. Suett to escort you home?" Sophia replied, with evident surprise—and perhaps some other feeling, for a dark red spot appeared, and burned for a moment on her brow.

"You will have to do him the homage of a first visit, I am afraid, Sophia," I answered, laughingly. "You cannot tell how absorbed in politics he has become. But it was lucky, I should say, that he could not accompany me this morning. No man could have seen Luxmoor's brutality—and not have broken every bone in his skin!"

"That might not be so easy with Luxmoor—he is a master of the science of self-defence, and drunk or sober, is as brave as a lion," Sophia observed, with some vehemence. "But you will do more to ravel my work, by telling what you have witnessed, to your husband, than all

Digitized by Google

the anonymous letters that perplex the cogitation of my lord bishop. So you must promise me, dear Hugh-Helena! indeed you must!—not to make any mention of the distressing spectacle you have witnessed, at Plas Newydd!"

"Well! if you will promise to come and see how I can keep a secret, within the next three days!"

Sophia mused deeply for a moment or two. "Nay, now, dearest," she then observed with a smile that was yet full of uneasiness and hesitation, "you really must excuse me for a time! It will not offend you, if I tell you the true reasons why I must decline visiting at Plas Newydd? In the first place, it is impossible for me to endure the stupid, ungrammatical insults of your mother-in-law! In the next, it is a favourite plan of retaliation with Luxmoor—by way of dastard apology for himself, I presume!—to throw out the basest imputations on my character with other men! There is a great, buck-faced fellow about here—a Squire Gawker—whom he is always, without the slightest reason, throwing in my face! And now he would not scruple, you may depend upon it, if he saw the least chance, to renew his old vile scandals in another direction! You understand me, dearest?"

Digitized by Google

What haughty demon was it prompted me to reply? "What extreme nonsense, Sophia! Why, I don't know that you would ever even see Scarlatt! He told me himself that he had no longer any time whatever to devote to amusement and the society of persons not immediately associated with his political objects."

"Is he so much engaged as all that?" Sophia answered, fixing her penetrating gaze upon me. "He must be a good deal changed!—But in the midst of my own miseries I have quite forgotten to inquire whether your happiness is still as much without a cloud as in those glorious, honeymoon days of ours in Scotland, which are still among the brightest of my recollections?"

This question made me pause. It brought into sudden and marshalled array a long series of events and ideas which had succeeded one another too swiftly to assign each its just place and value, until that question seemed to bid the whole phalanx halt and present itself in reviewable order!

What had happened during these three years, to change or modify the passion that sent Scarlatt Suett and myself on so long an exile from our native land?

Digitized by Google

I can and will state truly what this lapse of time, and more familiar acquaintance with the character and manners of my husband, had effected for me.

I do not deny that my imagination, and even my heart, had undergone somewhat of that process of *disillusion*,—as it may well be called!—that usually follows the overstrained excitement, the frenzy, of a passion such, as I believed, I had inspired and shared!

No doubt it had happened with me, in the union I had formed, in a degree, as on my memorable mountain journey. Many a magnificent hue and light had vanished from the peaks—many a dark valley and turbid torrent had broken on my vision—since those earliest hours of love and joy! No doubt I was soon forced to discern in my husband glimpses of the selfishness, arrogance, and tyrannical assumption, which to others have always been marked features in his unmalleable, and yet not fixed or loftily unbending nature! Uncongenialities of disposition—even of temperament—could not but occasionally suggest themselves to me with painful distinctness. There was a coldness and an absence of all enthusiasm in Scarlatt's nature that sometimes

Digitized by Google

affected me with a strangely abyssmal sense of repulsion—as if in our inmost essence we were beings alien and opposed!

Scarlatt's mind—I too had learned to perceive—lacked germinative power and native affluence. It was well stored with much of the learning that can be taught, or is taught, in public schools. But the living and animating fire of genius was not aglow in the centre! This I knew, or, rather, I had felt on so many occasions, that the suspicion had already gained some ground in my convictions. I had missed—and speedily—the tone of romantic tenderness that had won me, from my husband's demeanour. But the transforming power of love was still and ever busy in my heart and brain. I had built for my idol so glorified a temple that it was long indeed before I could understand it was not in reality a god!

And up to this period I had in fact little or nothing tangible to complain of in my husband's conduct to me. With all my craving jealousy of affection, I had sense enough to know that I could not expect a husband to continue always a bridegroom. No devotion, no anxiety of love, could exceed those which Scarlatt had displayed

Digitized by Google

for me during the dangerous periods which occurred before the birth of my living child. These associations riveted him to my heart by a million delicate fibres; and now that I was the blest mother of the infant whose sweet earliest babblings would call him father—now that I saw in the beautiful, innocent face of my little Herbert the features of my own ancient race, mingled with all that was most attractive and engaging in his father's fine complexion and clear, blue, masterful eyes—no woman's heart ever more literally accepted the words of marriage-plight from wife to husband. I loved, I honoured, I obeyed Scarlatt Suett from the inmost depths of my soul!

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER V.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

I COULD therefore in all sincerity and truth reply to Sophia's question in terms that satisfied her of my unabated love for my husband, and my conviction of Scarlatt's ardent tenderness for me.

She listened to my glowing and delighted account with apparent satisfaction. With real, I thought it!—perhaps even it might be! Could it be possible she imagined I exaggerated my happiness to deepen the contrast of her misery? Suffering is very unjust!—But Sophia was too profoundly skilled in character and its

Digitized by Google

influences to be much misled. She spoke to me of Scarlatt's early projects; of his ambition to become a leading politician; of the high hopes formed of him. Were all those impulses gulfed in the completeness of his domestic happiness? Had he resolved to owe to his wife the elevation he once proposed to achieve for himself?—Oh, no; Scarlatt had too manly, too aspiring a temper for that! She elicited from me speedily that I had at least some degree of rivalry to dread from those alluring phantoms of power and vanity!

Time passed rapidly in this kind of conversation, and I could scarcely tear myself away from this dearly loved and unfortunate friend, though the increasing darkness warned me to be on the return. Sophia herself, at last openly, evinced uneasiness at the prospect of my being out late on the wild road I had to cross, and could not refrain finally from urging me not to delay my departure. I ascribed this hurrying wholly to a kind consideration for me—nor am I to this hour sure that it was not so! I draw no inference, nor wish any to be drawn, from the fact, that just as Sophia was escorting me over the flowery churchyard—which owed its beautifying

Digitized by Google

and elegance, it seemed, entirely to her wish to counteract the gloom of such a spectacle, always in view—Squire Gawker was announced, and made his appearance, bashfully stalking up the avenue of yews.

Gawker was a very awkward, loutish young man, of gigantic stature and strength, terribly sun-freckled, with high cheek bones and sandy red hair; and it certainly struck me a little at the time that he paid a visit so late in the evening, and still in the red coat and boots he had been hunting in probably the whole day, for an exhausted horse, of some fleet race, stood smoking and streaming with perspiration at the gate.

He came also on an errand that appeared to me—and was in reality—a very awkward and foolish mark of homage to a lady—to present Mrs. Luxmoor with the *fox's brush* they had pulled down in the course of the day! But the squire himself evidently thought not lightly of the gift, for until he observed me—I had stopped a short distance behind Mrs. Luxmoor, perceiving the approach of a stranger—he continued to flourish it triumphantly, and, as I thought, rather familiarly, aloft! I saw and heard that

Digitized by Google

she received the attention with a coldness almost amounting to contemptuous disdain—and, remembering her husband's insulting allusions to this young sporting Hercules, I could well account for it. But not so readily for the surprised and gaping manner of Gawker himself, at the style in which his offering was received, for he wound it sulkily up at once, and muttering, as it seemed to me. "Nay, then, I'll take it where 't'll be more welcome!" Off he strode away like a stunned Goliath! Sophia, herself, plainly saw that this scene required an explanation. She gave it me—with an air of vexation and embarrassment—and as usual taking care, in an underhand way, to inflict some portion of the discomfort she experienced. "It is a great loutish Nimrod who ought to feed on thistles instead of grass!—but who has taken it into his head that I have some influence with a wealthy widow lady living about here, whose fortune he would be glad to secure! And so he comes boring me incessantly, *to direct him how to manage his wooing!*—and even to write him his billets-doux and trash of that sort!"

I returned to Plas Newydd in a much less cheerful mood than I had expected, and without

Digitized by Google

having been able to prevail on Sophia to promise to come and see me there. In fact, she at last plainly refused: but on a new ground. Madame Le Crampon was an inmate there; a woman whom she detested from the bottom of her soul, and of whom she naïvely declared that she was—jealous! She laughed indeed as she said so; but reminding me of the particulars she had formerly communicated, she asked me if I did not think she was right not to put such inflammable materials as her husband was composed of in the way of temptation? We both laughed again, and parted without renewing the subject.

As I have said, I returned to Plas Newydd in by no means so cheerful a mood as I had left it; lamenting my friend's fate, and saddened with the recollection that I might be considered in some degree accessory to it, by bringing about the reconciliation between her and her truly detestable partner.

I will be candid, however, and confess that I was not altogether displeased at the indifference, or rather repugnance, evinced by both Scarlatt and Sophia to a renewal of their acquaintance!

I was in a mood nevertheless, after all I had

Digitized by Google

witnessed, for the reception of evil news; and very bad awaited me!

On arriving at Plas Newydd, I found the whole household in consternation, and Mrs. Suett, in an agony of grief and indignation, scrawling a letter to summon her husband instantly from town. I soon learned the disastrous occasion. My father's long-brooding vengeance had burst at last! Officers of the law had arrived at Plas Newydd very shortly after my departure, who arrested my husband on a charge of abduction! They conveyed him at once before a magistrate, a particular friend of my father's, besides having a private grief of his own against the Suetts—who had refused to take bail; and consequently Scarlatt was committed to the county jail!

And thus the first meeting between my father and husband had been in a position of mutual hostility, as accuser and accused, in a charge of *felony!* It was little consolation to me, under these circumstances, to learn that the insulting violence of Lord Mauleverer's demeanour on the occasion was only surpassed by the forbearance and conciliating tone adopted by Scarlatt. If ever mild answer turned away wrath, his should

Digitized by Google

have mitigated my father's exasperation!—but it had not done so. For not satisfied with this pounce, Lord Mauleverer had openly applied for and obtained a warrant to secure my person and take me to Mauleverer Castle, as a fugitive, under age, from the lawful authority of my parents!

My absence was, therefore, so far fortunate—and after his committal, Scarlatt had sent his mother home, with all possible speed, to warn me, above all things, to keep myself from falling into my father's power, or the probabilities were that we should be separated as long as his parental dominion lasted! I was then only nineteen. But, more than all this: Mrs. Suett herself had heard Lord Mauleverer expressly command the officers to take care that "no brat, of whatever age," was allowed to accompany me! Mrs. Suett had but just returned from the deplorable scene before the magistrate, and had despatched a messenger to desire me to remain in concealment at Llanhowel, intending to inform the officers that I was gone back to the continent! But being ordered to take a byway, the man had apparently missed me; and Mrs. Suett thought she could at best only have

Digitized by Google

a very short start of the officers in their post-chaise!

My distraction at this dreadful news almost deprived me of any faculty of judgment. I insisted on proceeding at once to join my husband in his captivity! But his mother brought positive instructions from him that I was not to attempt it. Scarlatt had written me a few agitated words in pencil to the same effect, assuring me that he should be bailed in a few days, on application in London, and meanwhile, even peremptorily, commanding me, unless I took my father's view, and disowned him for a husband! to remain in the closest concealment, wherever it might be most feasible to elude research. I proposed in consequence to go back at once to Llanhowel; but Mrs. Suett would not hear of that: it was on the way to Mauleverer; and she was convinced "the woman there" was not to be trusted! She was involved in the same scrape, and to secure indemnity for herself and her rascally husband, she would not hesitate to betray me! I was warmly rebutting this allegation, when the chances of effecting any evasion at all became doubtful. One of our miners, posted for the purpose, came running,

Digitized by Google

breathlessly, to announce the appearance of a postchaise in the direction my intended capturers might be expected!

The idea of being separated from my child gave me all the energy and resources of desperation! And, while Mrs. Suett wrung her hands in despair, a glance I caught of the distant Ap Howel ruin suddenly suggested the recollection of my former proposed refuge in it—and the possibility of finding one there in this emergency. No one would dream of seeking me in a pile of ruins! I told Mrs. Suett my intenions, snatching up my child, in readiness for flight, from the fine lace-curtained cradle her fond pride and prodigality had provided for it. And I remember she made several objections: that certain "old rubbishing people of Sir Vivian's" lived there now, who might not give me a very kind welcome: that we were not on very friendly terms with Sir Vivian himself: that he was "cheek by jowl" with Lord Mauleverer, and being hourly expected at the ruin, would "most likely split where I was to be found!" The very notion of anything disloyal or unkind on the part of young Ap Howel appeared to me preposterous! And Mrs. Suett

Digitized by Google

herself admitted, in reply to my warm negation of the suggestion, that there was no probability in it. Only her son might think so, as they had never been very good friends! I soon, however, convinced her that we had no time to study niceties like these—and within a few minutes of the receipt of the intelligence, I was hastening, at a speed I knew not till then I could exert, up the steep crest of the Howel Mynydd.

I was attended by my nurse with little Herbert, only—Mrs. Suett remained to present a good countenance against the perquisition of the agents of the rusty, one-sided laws put into such vigorous action by my father.

It was about ten at night when I and my attendant—luckily, a plump, unexcitable Fleming—reached the summit of the hill. And how often, as I heard the melancholy, raving voice of the torrent of the Rhaiadr Dhu, on that hurried transit, did I mentally repeat the words of the despairing Bronwen of the White Neck—*O beth y wnaf fi?*

I was in a really fearful state of exhaustion and dismay when I arrived in the midst of those dark, mouldering masses of ruins, where I hardly knew how to select the inhabited portion. I had

Digitized by Google

no guide now; and it was a night so dark that every indication was confounded under its black canopy. I had not recovered my strength completely since the birth of little Herbert—and I suppose I must have looked more like a hunted hare than a rational creature when I paused to endeavour to ascertain whither to direct my steps, amidst the masses of fallen and falling masonry.

On a sudden I heard the sound of a harp—of a legitimate ancient Welsh harp—touched evidently by the hand of a master. With an air, too, in strange unison with the disastrous circumstances of the undreamed-of auditor!—the exquisitely plaintive one known in England as "Poor Mary Anne;" in Wales, by its proper original title, "Ar hyd y nôs." It was played with a equal tenderness and pathos by the invisible musician. But my chief motive in listening was to ascertain the direction whence the sounds came; and while pausing for this purpose, the prelude ceased, and a voice which it seemed to me I remembered, and yet could not fully associate with any individual, began to sing to the accompaniment of those mournful chords. It was a full, rich, manly voice—fraught with feeling and

Digitized by Google

expression. And to my great surprise, though the words of the verses were in Welsh, every one of them seemed to finish with a sound exactly resembling my own name — Hugh-Helena! And then it was—I know not by what compelling link of ideas—the conviction flashed upon me that the singer was young Ap Howel! But it was an inspiration of delirious excitement, doubtless, that induced me to summon an assistance, I felt an unspeakable conviction would not fail me in the hour of my need, by shrieking loud enough to reach him the fatal words: *O beth y wnaf fi?*

The song and music ceased suddenly. A confusion of several voices came to my ear, apparently in mingled alarm and remonstrance. Then a ray of light streamed from an opening door, at some distance amidst the ruins, and a figure appeared at it, throwing the glare of a pine brand, evidently just snatched from a fire, over the whole surrounding scene, with an expression of the most intense anxiety in the gazing visage. Two old but benevolent-looking women's faces peered over the young man's shoulder—for it was a young man—and a sightless and very old and snowy-haired but

Digitized by Google

still fine-featured venerable man's, completed the group thus illuminated.

He was greatly changed, but I instantly recognised Sir Vivian Ap Howel! I called him by his name—and as if with the word he was beside me—arriving just in time to prevent my sinking to the ground with excess of fatigue and emotion. The two women had meanwhile followed in his steps, though with evident caution —probably under the influence of some superstitious apprehension.

I shall never forget the indescribably mingled tones in which Sir Vivian exclaimed,—"" Good God! it is *Hugh-Helena!*—It is *Mrs. Scarlatt Suett!*—She has not been enabled to effect her flight from her father's barbarous frenzy!—She comes to me—to us—for refuge!"

His figure, though now much taller and more muscularly developed, was still very slender, and gave few indications of the strength he must have exerted in supporting my almost powerless frame into the tower.

How kind, how patient, how wisely helpful and sympathetic did this young man show himself during all the paroxysm of grief and terror that came over me even when I felt myself

Digitized by Google

placed in comparative safety! How watchfully he directed and stimulated the attention of the two kind old women! With what tender commiseration did he hear and reply to all my wailings of anguish and despair! With what unwearied goodness did he listen to my reiterated and incoherent story of the disasters that had driven me to take refuge under his ruined roof! And although—by an ungrateful kind of instinct—amidst the really half-delirious effusions of my gratitude for his interposition, I kept assuring him I had no notion he himself was there when I sought for refuge at Castell Ap Howel!

He explained as repeatedly that it was quite by chance he was there indeed; that he happened to hear from the friend with whom I corresponded—from Mrs. Luxmoor—that mine and my husband's return was expected, and he had hoped to conclude some unpleasant business he had at Plas Newydd before that event occurred. But he had been misinformed or mistaken in the time: and had only himself arrived at Ap Howel within a few hours—being on his arrival much grieved to learn the unhappy circumstance that had taken place so recently at Plas Newydd.

Digitized by Google

Finding I still laboured under apprehensions of pursuit, Sir Vivian interspersed his explanations with the most earnest assurances that I was now safe from it—that even if the officers traced me he could secure my evasion from the tower; and would defend me to the utmost of his power! He barricaded the door and windows of the apartment, to convince me of his sincerity, and even went so far, moved by my almost frenzied entreaties, as to make a solemn asseveration that, at all events, they should not separate me from my child!

Hours passed almost exclusively in these effusions and consolations—in panic alarms and quietings—until about midnight, when a messenger arrived from Mrs. Suett to state that the officers were gone, after having, by virtue of their warrant, searched Plas Newydd "from garret to cellar!" But they were suspected to be still lurking in observation about the house, and therefore Mrs. Suett advised me to remain where I was until more certain information could be obtained.

These tidings tranquillised me so far that I was now enabled to understand the position in which I found myself, and to take a rational

Digitized by Google

survey of the scene and persons amid which I had placed myself.

It was the same apartment of the ruin as that in which I had formerly taken shelter. But it was now decently furnished, though in a very homely and unpretending style, combining the requisites of a kitchen and a parlour. It seemed probable that other chambers in the tower had been placed in habitable order, for the blind old harper, Caradoc, and his two daughters apparently resided in it. Indeed they told me so, when Mrs. Suett's message had been delivered to me, as, with a needless reflection that dyed my hitherto pallid cheeks with colour, I said, No: it was impossible: at every risk I must return to Plas Newydd at once: there was no place where I could stay for a whole night, up there, I thought!

"There are rooms in the tower which have been prepared for my reception—and I can be accommodated, I have no doubt, as usual, at Plas Newydd!" Vivian replied, with a dark flush also—"I did not intend to trouble the good people there with my company again—but there is *nothing* I will not do with pleasure that can be of service to you, Mrs.——Mrs.——Suett!—at this unhappy juncture!"

Digitized by Google

I would fain not dwell on these particulars of self-devotion and chivalrous delicacy and generosity, exhibited by Vivian Ap Howel towards me, in every stage of our intercourse saving only the unutterable last! But I must do him the little justice still in my power!—It was determined upon as he had proposed—and by this singular evolution of circumstance, I became the guest of a host whom I dispossessed of his accommodations to make them my own.

It is not necessary I should dilate on this episode, though it was afterwards wrested so cruelly and unjustly to my disadvantage. With what injustice, in fact, may be ascertained from the true assurance I give the reader, that nearly the whole of that first night I spent under the decayed roof of Castell Ap Howel, I devoted to the consideration how I might best influence its young owner to become an intercessor on behalf of my husband and myself with my exasperated sire.

Sophia's inuendoes—my own observation—had satisfied me I still possessed a degree of interest in the kindness and sympathy of Sir Vivian, which I thought might be drawn into the course I desired them to take. Mere youth

Digitized by Google

as he was, he was known to enjoy much consideration and intimacy at Mauleverer. He had at once and spontaneously expressed his disapprobation of my father's rigid measures. I was too blinded by the excess of my affection for my husband and child to perceive how great, how unjustifiable, were the sacrifices I was about to demand of him in their names! But, until Scarlatt was torn so relentlessly from me, I had certainly not known how much I loved him! A few months previously, when he had actually himself proposed that I should solicit Sir Vivian's interposition on our behalf, I had rejected the notion with a kind of contumely! Scarlatt, however, could not have been aware at the time of the peculiar reasons I had, not to wish to present myself as a petitioner, in such a cause, to young Ap Howel! But now every consideration saving the possibility of redeeming my husband and child and myself from the dangers menacing us, seemed puerile, and unworthy to be weighed in the balance!

Yet I wonder now at my confidence in the boundless generosity which only—I should have known—could have responded to my appeal —at the seemingly unsupported consciousness I

Digitized by Google

must have possessed of the dominion I could exercise over the young man's motives and will, when on the following day, at our first meeting, I implored Sir Vivian, in every form of earnest intreaty at my command, to become the mediator between my angry father and my husband and myself for pardon—or at least desistance from the vengeful course the former had entered on.

Ap Howel himself was, perhaps, struck with some surprise at the unbounded confidingness of this demand. But the lavish tenderness and generosity of his own nature suggested to him readily excuses for the seeming selfishness and forgetfulness of all but myself and mine implied in the petition! He, too, was moved by the innocent beauty of my child, to which I appealed, in my intreaties that he would plead it to melt its stern grandsire's indignation! He took the little creature in his arms, kissed it, and returning the infant to me—not to the nurse who expected it—while one large, dark tear, like a thunder-drop, fell and splashed on its sweet, rosy visage, he promised me, without a word of hesitation, instantly to proceed to Mauleverer and do all that lay in his power to fulfil my wishes.

I furnished him with a full detail of what my

Digitized by Google

husband would do and promise, to procure his father-in-law's forgiveness; and once or twice certainly a smile of some feeling, nigh akin to contempt, glimmered over Vivian's quivering and sensitive upper lip. But I had the good news of his having departed for Mauleverer, on this mission, to announce, when Mrs. Suett waddled up the hill about noonday, to pay me a visit. On my part I learned then, with surprise, that he had not resumed his quarters at Plas Newydd, nor had Mrs. Suett seen him at all since his return.

Mr. Craddock, whoever—so Mrs. Suett, much to his annoyance, always persisted in styling Caradoc, the blind harper, whose family tenanted the ruin—had an explanation to offer. The young chief—so he always styled Sir Vivian—had been seized with a fit of restlessness to which he was subject, as all his ancestors had been before him, and had endeavoured to walk it off by wandering over the Howell Mynydd until dawn.

But, in spite of this first gleam of success, the events of the day were but slightly encouraging. I received a letter, it is true, from Scarlatt, urging upon me the very course I had adopted

Digitized by Google

—at least so far as regarded making an appeal to the friendly interposition of young Ap Howel, so soon as he should arrive—and forbidding me, under any fancy of alleviating his annoyances by my presence, to come near him in his place of confinement, where I might be so easily watched and captured. But Sir Vivian returned with yet more disastrous tidings. He had not seen Lord Mauleverer, who was set out in person to London, to procure a writ of Habeas Corpus, in order to compel the Suetts to surrender me into his custody. And the pleadings on that writ, an attorney, whom Mrs. Suett had sent for, informed us would involve, and perhaps adversely, the validity of my stolen marriage with Scarlatt Suett and the legitimacy of the birth of my child! It was but a slight mitigation to learn that Vivian had seen and conversed with my mother, who was heart-stricken at what had happened, had done all she could to dissuade her lord from the course he had taken, and promised that she would exert every effort, on his return, to induce him to relinquish his violent purposes. Lord Mauleverer was expected home with his writ in three days, as the courts were then sitting. But I formed no hopes from this interposition, knowing

Digitized by Google

what a very slight influence my mother had ever exercised over my father's determinations.

A suggestion, however, broke upon me like a ray of light; and at my earnest, almost delirious intreaties, Sir Vivian consented to hasten up at once to London, on my father's steps, and endeavour to persuade him to relinquish his mercilessly vengeful proceedings!

He did not lose a single hour in departing on this errand of redemption. And what a contrast did the generous ardour and singleness of the youth's devotion present to the demeanour of the father of the man whose chief possessions were placed in so much jeopardy, when he arrived a few hours after Sir Vivian had set out on his journey to London!

John Thomas had not received his wife's letter, containing an account of our disasters. He had left town immediately on the intelligence brought to him of the fête given on his son's return; and with the intention, we soon learned, of prohibiting any farther demonstrations in the direction it was easy to discern Scarlatt's views were turned. Some allowance must be made for the natural excitement of my father-in-law's feelings on ascertaining what had taken place.

Digitized by Google

But he announced a foregone conclusion, when he avowed it was no longer his intention to resign his seat—that his son's extravagance and debts, and the extraordinary avowal he had made of a change in the "family principles" on the important question of the Corn Laws—independently of "the mess he had got into"—had decided him for some time in the resolution!

John Thomas otherwise most certainly showed by no means the particular kind of sympathy and resentment he might have been expected to exhibit in his son's misfortunes. He declared, to all who chose to listen, that Scarlatt richly deserved all he had got, by allying himself to a pack of insolent aristocrats—who were quite right to worry so strange a dog for sneaking into their kennel! The best thing, he said, that could happen to us all now, would be that the marriage should in reality be declared null and void, and my Lord Standstill Dustbin have his daughter back again! Damaged goods certainly! but it was not *his* fault, if "the man" was bent on proving that his daughter was not a fellow's wife with whom she had been living these three years—and his grandson a bastard! And so he would tell "his lordship, forsooth," soon to his

Digitized by Google

face, he hoped, on the hustings—as parliament was just on the point of dissolution! Meanwhile his son must do the best he could in the scrape he had run himself into! But, of course, with such a charge hanging over him, he could never dream of having any chance for the representation he wanted to oust his own father in!

In short, the selfish pseudo-democrat displayed the worst side of his character, in the worst possible light, on this occasion; and, as I told poor, whimpering Mrs. Suett, I was glad I was not under his roof at the time, as the cruel unkindness he exhibited would have compelled me to leave it at once, even if I had had no other shelter to seek than the woods of the Howel Mynydd!

I cannot bear to dwell on this afflicting exhibition of the action of inordinate and egotistical passions! I turn with a sense of joyful relief—mingled, yet, how inexpressibly with pain!—to the contrast offered in the whole conduct of Vivian Ap Howel, throughout this disastrous affair.

After three days' absence, he returned to Castell Ap Howel with a faintly encouraging glimpse of success. His delineation of my

Digitized by Google

despair—of the beauty of my child—of the terrible consequences in disgrace and ruin to us all, that must follow the steps he had entered on—won at length so far upon my father's better feelings that he had consented to desist from his application to compel my surrender: on the condition only, nevertheless, that I made it a voluntary one! And he had yielded also to suffer my child to accompany me—in the return he insisted I should make to Mauleverer. But his animosity against my husband and the whole Suett family continued unabated! He would not promise to relinquish any of the means of coercion or vengeance in his power against them! On the contrary, he seemed resolved to pursue them in every extremity that laws, contrived by angry fathers surely, could place in his power!

At first I rejected, at once, and with the most positive decision, the bare notion of consenting to sever my fortunes from those of my husband —of yielding to my father's tyrannous will so abjectly—including, I doubted not, a separation of years from my beloved husband! But Vivian reasoned with me in his sympathetic and truthfully earnest way, and induced me to reconsider this first natural impulse. He represented to

Digitized by Google

me the certainty that my refusal would induce my father to proceed at once in his efforts to annul the marriage, and possibly bring disgrace and dishonour on my whole connexion with Scarlatt, and its issue—certainly, provoke a scandalous conflict, and throw a slur on my child's derivation, which, however decided, it would be difficult ever after to efface! Whereas, if I yielded to my father's will in this instance, the submission would have the best effect upon him, and prepare him for the future efforts to which I could devote myself in bringing about a general reconciliation. "And believe me, Hugh-Helena!—pardon me, if I cannot yet bring myself to call you by the name which is now yours too!" Vivian said, with his slightly sarcastic and playful but still very melancholy smile—"Believe me—it is impossible for any one—even so obstinately relentless and determined a man as your father! long to resist anything you have set the true eloquence of your honest and tender heart to win! Do you know, I myself came down here, all resentment and relentlessness against the Suetts—although you had become one of them!"—He checked himself suddenly, and then added in another tone: "I believe you

Digitized by Google

have only to give signs of external submission —to plead your cause in person—to gain it! Your mother will be there to intercede for you —I will do my best—and I am convinced that everything will become possible and feasible when you are removed from the society and surrounding of the Suett family in general, whose vulgarity and insolence your father detests beyond expression! Scarlatt is handsome—*still*, I presume!—and *he* has received a good —college—education! Your father will be brought to *endure him* much more easily, trust me, without his friends about him!"

Remembering the recent coarse displays of the elder Suett, I was the more readily influenced by this argument. I perceived some impropriety also in my remaining at Castell Ap Howel, receiving the hospitality of so young and unmarried a host! yet I could not bear the thought of returning to Plas Newydd—where, besides, I should not be safe an hour from my father's vengeful researches. I was constitutionally rash and precipitate in all my resolutions! But I own that, after all, I was to blame to adopt so decisive a resolution without my husband's permission! In short, I resolved to return at once

Digitized by Google

to Mauleverer, sending Scarlatt an account of the motives that influenced me, and of Sir Vivian's generous interposition.

I was not restrained by Mrs. Suett's angry declarations that I ought never to think of going to Mauleverer unless my husband was to be received there with me and "in triumph!" I declined John Thomas's offer of his carriage and four; and finally, in a hired vehicle, accompanied by my nurse and child, and under the escort of Sir Vivian—without whose countenance and protection I felt I should never have dared to enter the presence of my irritated parent—I returned, after my long *erraticism*, to Mauleverer Castle.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VI.

RECONCILIATION.

VIVIAN'S knowledge of my father's character, and of the means of influencing it, had not deceived him. My unreserved submission and return disarmed so much of his wrath, that my reception was even more than pardoning: it was tender. It is probable he intended to receive me with the upbraidings and reproaches he no doubt considered due to my want of duty, and the disgraceful derogation he believed in his haughty spirit I had brought on our name. But when, in the midst of my father's first vehement words, I sunk on my knees at his feet, and raised my infant in mute supplication: when my mother, tottering in, threw her arms

Digitized by Google

round his neck and mine, and drew us both to her bosom in an agony of joy, and love, and sorrow, which was a rare climax in her undemonstrative and seemingly passionless existence: when the young soldier, Ap Howel, himself sobbed aloud, and rushed from among us, vanquished by the sensibility of his brave and tender heart—my father, too, melted; my father, too, joined in the solemn blessing by which my mother consecrated my child hers, his—the child of the house of Mauleverer!

It was several months, nevertheless, before this reconciliation extended its healing wings over my husband also. And meanwhile I had to endure restless upbraidings and reproaches for what he chose to designate a desertion, which all my assurances and entreaties could not for a long time mitigate. Nevertheless, as a first fruit, all proceedings on my father's part against Scarlatt and his family were abandoned. No obstacles were offered to his being set at liberty; and he returned to Plas Newydd, where the open rupture with his own father, that speedily followed the event, certainly facilitated his reconcilement with mine.

At this calm interval of time, I am not dis-

Digitized by Google

posed to defend my father's vindictive exaction —still less my husband's too ready acquiescence —in the condition the former placed on permission for Scarlatt to make a first visit at Mauleverer. My husband's electioneering address had appeared; and it was stipulated that in case of the resistance of the elder Suett to the resolution of the Conservative party in the county, to oust him, on the first opportunity, from his seat, his son was to engage in open contest against him!

Scarlatt, on his side, adroitly required that, to prevent too obvious a scandal in the concussion, he should be allowed at once to assume "his lordship's and his beloved wife's family name."

Parliament was not, however, dissolved so soon as was expected; and had it not been for the condition in which I found myself, soon to become the mother of my daughter, Evelyn, it is probable Lord Mauleverer would have protracted much longer his resentment, and its external signs, against one whom he continued to look upon as an interloper and intruder in his family.

But at this period I had gained almost won-

Digitized by Google

derfully in my father's love and favour; chiefly, I believe, through the exceeding fondness he took at once for his little grandson. It was not difficult for Lord Mauleverer to trace the lineaments of his own ancient race in the splendid little fellow's developing countenance; and for their sake he forgave Herbert his ruddy bloom of complexion and the golden tinge in his hair, though he ridiculed the latter at first by declaring that the child was a perfect dandelion! My father finally lost the energy to refuse me what he plainly discerned was an object of hope and constant solicitude with me.

He continued, certainly, to declare a total incredulity in the assurances I gave him of the disinterestedness of Scarlatt's attachment to me in the first instance—of his ignorance of my identity with the heiress of Mauleverer. But they had some influence in bringing about his final yielding, I should imagine.

The first interview between my father and husband was of perilous and doubtful issue. The opposition between the men was typified in their very aspects and persons. My father looked like a portrait of Velasquez, stepped all dark, and stately, and stern, from an old can-

Digitized by Google

vass; Scarlatt, as if he had just descended, in the newest and brightest of oils, from the gilded frame-work of a fashionable academician's most recent handiwork.

But, on the whole, they got on together better than either my mother or I had ventured to hope. After all, Scarlatt had some reason for the demeanour he adopted; and the despotism of my father's temper speedily found itself on congenial ground in the deference, amounting to awe, which his now received son-in-law exhibited for all he said, or even looked, during that first memorable interview.

Once at Mauleverer, Scarlatt devoted himself—even in my judgment—with too whole and implicit a submission and adulation, to win my father's further favour. Yet it is an indisputable fact that he succeeded for a while.

I did not at the time understand, or appreciate in its full force, a motive that no doubt greatly influenced Scarlatt in taking so decided a part against his own father, whose wealth at least should apparently have rendered him an object of more dutiful observance with a son trained in such maxims as John Thomas's had been. Sir Vivian, who visited occasionally at

Digitized by Google

Mauleverer, before he proceeded to join his regiment, for the first time, in its quarters in the south of England, informed me of the fact I allude to. But very carelessly, and as if it was one that scarcely needed to be taken into consideration. He had consented to waive for a time the decision of his claims for a restoration of the Howel Mynydd property; but in the conference that took place on the subject, the elder Suett had so far admitted their legality, as to propose that on Vivian's attaining his majority, the whole case should be submitted to arbitration. This proposal, Vivian observed—and to me only—he had consented to.

It did not, I say, at the time strike a person so ignorant of all kinds of business matters as myself, that the Suetts must veritably discern a great flaw in their title of possession to propose or yield to such a compromise! Most assuredly they must have seen greater hopes of advantage to be derived from the generous forbearance of the young heir, than they could hope to find in any chicanery of the law! And thus, I did not understand all that was magnanimous and self-denying in the young man's efforts to bring about a reconciliation, which must even in this

Digitized by Google

respect be likely to deprive him of his most powerful friend and supporter! Neither did I know till long, long afterwards, that his father's plan of arrangement received the most persevering opposition from Scarlatt, and that their first open quarrel was on the subject!

It was not from Scarlatt, of course—still less from the modest generosity of Ap Howel himself—that I was likely to learn that the latter's chief motive in refraining to urge his claims to an immediate and legal adjustment, lay in his desire not to throw further discredit on the family whose alliance I had formed—diminish the only lustre to which it could pretend, or give pretext for my father's animosity to increase the obstacles to the restoration of that peace I so ardently desired to bring about between him and my husband.

I neither conceal, nor wish to conceal this further—that during the slow progress of the reconciliation, to effect which I had devoted myself, Sir Vivian availed himself of several short leaves of absence to appear at Castell ap Howel, which he was beginning to place in some repair! With the sole object, so far as I understood or dreamed, of witnessing the progress of

Digitized by Google

those works. And whenever he chose to come over to Mauleverer, during these seasons, he was always a welcome guest. He was a particular favourite with my father, and, in spite of his youth, a companion in whose society he took great pleasure. My mother loved him as a son! And surely I should have been a most ungrateful creature had I not been among those who felt and expressed the greatest satisfaction in these visits. But never—so may heaven help or desert me in my dying hour!—had I the least reason to suspect the existence of that misplaced passion, which it would answer no purpose now to deny, continued ever an inmate of the poor youth's too sensitive and unchanging heart!

No word or look from Vivian ever gave me cause to dread the unhappy secret. I had come to regard the circumstances that marked our early acquaintance, as merely eccentric exhibitions of the precocious imagination and premature moral development distinguishable in every stage of Vivian's advance to manhood: effusions of the romance and excitability of his overstrained and feverish temperament! It did not even strike me as a coincidence, that after my

Digitized by Google

husband's formal reception at Mauleverer, he ceased to take such delight in his visits to Ap Howel, and, indeed, did not make his appearance again among us until he came to take a farewell before embarking with his regiment, which was under orders for India, and was already lying at Plymouth.

I particularly remember it was the very day Scarlatt was returned, without opposition, member of parliament, in the seat his father had so long occupied. The elder Suett now held the unpopular principles amongst a constituency chiefly agricultural. But he made a virtue of necessity, vociferously declaring himself too great a friend to "purity of representation" to use such means of contest as might give him a chance of balancing that circumstance, and my father's interest. Rich as he owned himself to be, he added, that he knew pleasanter ways of spending his money than in procuring "a squat" among a lot of fellows who had scarcely patience to hear a man open his lips, and were always crying "Question, question!" whenever anything but a "spawn of aristocracy" undertook to enlighten them!

I myself hoped that the unnatural kind of

Digitized by Google

conflict offered, and consciousness that he had so long and publicly announced his intentions in favour of his son, weighed something with John Thomas. But, certain it is, he retired from the field before the affair came to any decisive issue, and—my father had the pleasure to learn from his son-in-law—in a state of mortification and defeat that almost balanced the sufferings inflicted on himself years previously by his success! The whirligig of time indeed brings about his revenges!

However, as I have said, my husband and his reconciled father-in-law were away at the county town, engaged in the usual festivities of an election triumph—when Sir Vivian arrived at Mauleverer to take his farewell.

I had remained at home with my mother, whose exceeding languor and debility rendered every kind of excitement painful to her, and who could not bear to be deprived of my society for any lengthened time since it had been restored to her after so disastrous an interval. Indeed I have some hope that my devotion to my dear mother during that short remaining period of her languishing existence, in a measure atoned for the grief and discomfort I had been the means of previously bringing upon her.

Digitized by Google

To complete the singular revolution of circumstances, Sophia Sutcliffe—Mrs. Luxmoor—was with me, on a visit for the day. Not for longer: she always, and with immoveable resolution, refused to stay away a single night from Llanhowel parsonage. It is horrible, it is disgusting, to have to relate it! But the unhappy woman *dared not* trust her vile husband, even for that brief interval, under the same roof with the young girls whom her really thoughtful and judicious superintendence was educating into good servants, or mistresses of rural families, in her house!

Even his own home—the roof beneath which his wife dwelt—still young, still one of the most fascinating and engaging of women, even in the opinion of the depraved wretch himself—still not unworthy of the deepest affection and respect—not yet corrupted to the quality of the corruption she dwelt withal—nothing in heaven or earth, in fact, was sacred to that detestable man!

Yet even under these conditions, and when I was established at Mauleverer, where it could not have been so irksome for her to come to as Plas Newydd, Sophia continued a very unfrequent visitor. There seemed no other very valid reason

Digitized by Google

—excepting perhaps that her husband was now, on the contrary, a constant and welcome one with mine at the Castle! She dreaded to expose herself, she declared, to some open exhibition of his brutality towards her! She wished above all things, she repeatedly assured me, with tears in her eyes, to spare herself public indignity and exposure of the true state of the relations between them. And at her continued earnest desire, I concealed them also, so far as they were known to me.

Perhaps if I had stated all I had witnessed, I should not so readily have obtained credence at Mauleverer—at all events, with my husband. Scarlatt found the abilities of Luxmoor, his skill in language, and knowledge of men and manners, of infinite use to him in the career he had entered on. And Luxmoor took care to present and conduct himself at Mauleverer in a manner that seemed to give a practical refutation to the statements he might reasonably conclude his wife made to his disadvantage. My private conviction of his infamous misdemeanour, though I was not permitted to divulge my reasons, made me on my part turn a deaf ear to the scandalous accusations which, from time to time, I learned

Digitized by Google

from Scarlatt, Luxmoor continued to insinuate against his wife. He pretended to be jealous of her with the sporting squire, their neighbour—and even of a poor young curate of the next parish, whom Sophia was frequently obliged to request to perform his duties in church ministrations, when he had incapacitated himself.

She herself told me that she liked this young man—a pale, consumptive youth of two-and-twenty—because she thought he somewhat resembled her father.

Luxmoor even strove to apologise for such parts of his conduct as he knew could not but be extensively reported, on the pretence of being driven to drink by domestic unhappiness! He would have had it believed that Sophia—who seemed to every one else so mild and patient in her temper—was a perfect fury to him! He had even the grotesque absurdity to declare that she could scold worse with her silence, than other women with their tongues. Then again I heard that Luxmoor should aver she had become an insupportable pedant!—refused him any comfort of society—and had in fact taken to bury herself among books, like a German professor! Scarlatt pretended that he had himself observed a good

Digitized by Google

deal of foundation for this last charge. Had *I* not noticed the pragmatical and conceited manner in which she presumed lately to join in conversation, "on subjects which it was quite impossible any woman could in the least understand," with my father—with Lord Mauleverer?

And true it is, I had noticed, and with satisfaction, the rapid progress Sophia made, from the most frozen and austere of all possible tolerations, to favour and even a kind of intimacy with Lord Mauleverer! My mother's constant kindness—tenderness indeed—towards her, could have been no element in her success. It evoked, on the contrary, unpleasing associations—and Sophia had further to combat the conviction still lurking in my father's mind, that she had taken an active part in the conspiracy to which he continued to impute my flight to and from Plas Newydd. She owed the triumph she finally achieved solely to her faculty of comprehending the weak points and master impulses of those who approached her, and of turning them to her own purposes.

Her progress was so gradual, too!—from the first downcast humility of the introduction I gave her—almost by accident—to the gracious fami-

Digitized by Google

liarity my father finally took her into, talking with her for hours on subjects I myself had no notion she understood anything about at all! Scarlatt even took the fanciful suspicion that she devoted herself to a course of dry reading, infinitely irksome to herself, but which enabled her to keep up a position of "parrot-knowledgeableness" in the discussions Lord Mauleverer liked best to exercise his profound and metaphysical habits of analysis upon!

But I was far from sharing the strange idea Luxmoor infused into my husband, and Scarlatt at last communicated without disguise to me! I need not, however, at this moment anticipate the wounding and degrading imputation.

No man was ever better qualified than my father to appreciate the superior qualities of Sophia's mind. Still it really was wonderful with what skill she managed so soon to overcome his strong prejudices, and moreover his disdain that any person of rank originally so inferior should presume to possess those superiorities; or that they should enforce a claim for their possessor to a position of equality with birth and hereditary station! But Sophia, by what I considered to be one of the marked and

Digitized by Google

most singular paradoxes in her character, seemed only to apply herself the more assiduously to remove those ingrained prepossessions and natural counteractions. I was long well pleased to witness how she succeeded —how my father grew gradually even to relish her society, until at last he almost always made one of our company, for a time, on her visits. In a haughty, condescending manner indeed! But Sophia hit his taste admirably in this respect also. She never presumed on this favour; and nothing could exceed the ingenuity of her submission to the pride and assumption of Lord Mauleverer's habitual demeanour. And yet there was nothing of an undue or toadying deference in her manner. Sophia could *crawl upright!* You would have said, for the most part, that she was yielding a homage she felt owed to natural superiorities rather than the factitious usurpations of society. It was this that rendered her so pleasing to my proud, but at the same time distrustful sire; and it was the grand distinction between her efforts to win his favour and those of Scarlatt.

I should have mentioned that every vestige of suspicion had vanished from my mind, in rela-

Digitized by Google

tion to the circumstances of the early acquaintance between my husband and Sophia. The first meeting between them, after so long a remotion, was alone sufficient to dispel all apprehension.

Scarlatt, involved at the time in his active projects of ambition, seemed literally to have forgotten who she was, when, happening to bustle into my apartment for some papers he wanted, he found me *tête-à-tête* with Sophia. I believe it was even her third or fourth visit to Mauleverer before she saw him! And no doubt she was altered considerably in person—latterly, with the anxiety and constant turmoil she lived in—somewhat for the worse; but one would not have thought to such an extent! Still there was nothing whatever of affectation to be noted in Scarlatt's apparent forgetfulness; and Sophia herself probably felt so. But the perfect equanimity with which she recalled herself to my husband's recognition, by the name of Luxmoor—the cold indifference he displayed at the announcement—the little trouble he took to make his brief tarriance in the apartment agreeable or cordial—would have contented any person the most disposed to draw unfavourable

Digitized by Google

inferences from what occurred. Scarlatt seemed, and perhaps literally was, quite absorbed in the political trifle he came in search of!

Sophia made a brief comment after his exit, however, which did a little trouble me. "You will have a formidable rival in politics some day, Mrs. Pomeroy!"—(My husband, and consequently myself, had then received the royal license to assume the name.)—"But thrice happy the woman who needs only grudge her husband's devotion to a Blue Book, and can sleep on the security that he is at no worse mischief than making or listening to a dull speech on Popery or sugar, at half-past three in the morning!"

On other occasions, when she had rather longer opportunities of observing us together, I did indeed, at times, think there was something of scrutiny in the silent attention she mostly devoted to the circumstances of our interviews!

I do not accuse Sophia of having formed any projects of seduction on Scarlatt then—if at any former period she had. He was no object for a woman of so much ambition and thirst for the pomps and vanities of the world—then! She

Digitized by Google

was much better informed of the real state of things at Plas Newydd than I was! A woman in reality of so proud and disdainful a spirit was more likely to repay Scarlatt's scornful indifference with hatred and contempt than any other feeling! But it possibly amused her keen and sarcastic spirit of observation to endeavour to penetrate the core of the outward seemings she witnessed—to ascertain whether the mock sun which she had herself raised in my dazzled vision still appeared to me the veritable King of Light!

But she saw little at this time to reward the analysis. No affection could be stronger than mine for my husband. Scarlatt's passion, at least for the personal qualities he could appreciate in me, and consciousness how much depended on preserving my attachment unshaken towards him, made him almost as tender and devoted a husband as he had been a lover.

Sophia, at all events, seemed to consider that nothing could exceed our happiness—to judge from her frequent expressions to that effect, and the poignant and mortifying contrasts she drew between her own condition and mine.

But, as a general fact, she was not given to

Digitized by Google

complaint. She did not take the tedious pleasure so many unhappy and wronged women do in dwelling on their domestic grievances. She allowed even my compassion and sympathy only an occasional glimpse into that dark interior of her existence—terrifying as a glimpse from the bright sunshine into a slaughter-house!

Undoubtedly Sophia Sutcliffe was one of the most deplorable of that numerous band of victims who by our laws find themselves irrevocably fastened in the fetters of an indissoluble union to vile and heartless men—even at times to the worst of felons. The wretch who narrowly escapes from the rope of the hangman, perhaps to finish his days in a remote and dishonoured exile, is yet supposed to keep bound to him, by what should be the holiest of ties, the innocent partner of his punishment—not guilt!

The secret of Sophia's quietism and seeming resignation lay, in fact, in one word—despair!

No possible alleviation of her fate could be looked for, saving—dreadful alternative! to whose verge, I believe, she was even then tempted, but from which she yet shrunk—saving in guilt of the deepest dye on her own part!

At times she would say laughingly (but what

Digitized by Google

sorrowful laughter it was!) that she *dared not complain!* It would cost her a "good beating," if any revelations she could be supposed to vent came to Luxmoor's ears!—besides the chances of losing their seven hundred a-year! "And then what an alternative for us!—either to starve, or earn one's living honestly!"

I had myself the conviction—witnessing all the barbarous, merciless, degrading treatment she endured, seeming anxious only to avoid any public scandal on it—that Sophia had not yet been enabled to vanquish her early attachment for the wretch who so unkindly repaid her devotion! I do not know that I was quite mistaken; but all this uncomplaining patience—this silent hugging of the mortal agony in the breast—appeared to me irresistible evidences of a lingering sentiment of the kind. Insensible to pecuniary considerations myself—almost, in fact, ignorant of the value of money—I did not believe in any such absorbing anxiety on her part to preserve the excellent income derived from her husband's abused "cure of souls." Yet, strangely enough! I had all the time the consciousness that a discontent unutterably profound and dangerous

Digitized by Google

gnawed at her chains in the dark beneath all these shows of resignation!

It is a problem that still sometimes recurs to me—Might Sophia have been not only an unharmful but useful and salutary member of society but for the reprobate vileness of that man's conduct towards her? Had there even been a possible release for her from his pestilent association, might she have righted herself by the force of her own strong mind, and the balancing influence of early good impressions? If so, accursed be the laws that would not suffer it! that kept in forced conjunction vitality with the corruption of moral death, and made Sophia—what she became—and thereby me also—what I am!

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VII.

A FAREWELL.

My mother reclined on a sofa, and little Herbert, wearied with some essays at walking, was asleep, nestling in her kind bosom. Gelert, who—I cannot write him *which*—had ever, since my return, been indulged in his decided preference for interiors of castles rather than of hutches—lay at the foot of the sofa, gravely on guard. We seemed all, save the sleeping infant, to be listening, with much interest and attention, to the perusal of one of Sophia's first essays in authorship. She read it to us in that sweet, clear, equable voice of hers, that sounded like the murmuring of a breeze among honeysuckles

Digitized by Google

—so low, tranquilly-toned, and redolent of all soft thoughts and images!

It was a quiet little village story, perfectly simple in its language and construction. Little would you have thought that gentle breeze over a verdant English down, could ever sweep into a simoom of the desert!

I am now convinced Sophia was almost making a jest of my mother and myself—mocking us in her secret soul—when she recited to us those simple, clear-aired legends as true effusions of her dark and complicated genius! To what end? I cannot say; unless that she feared to give an insight into the turbid vehemence of her nature, and awaken the suspicion and dread the unknown and powerful are apt to stir, one would deem, even in the unsentient things within the scope of their influence!

It was admirable, however, I thought, this little tale of Sophia's, in its tender and pathetic simplicity; Wordsworthian. Founded on fact, too, she told us. The story of a rustic youth, betrothed to a village maiden, who was accidentally drowned in attempting to cross the ford of the Rhaiadr Dhu, on an excursion to visit his sweetheart in a neighbouring dell. The lasting

Digitized by Google

fidelity of this poor bereaved one—her death, very aged, still lamenting the lover of her youth with an unchanged heart—was the subject-matter of the tale. It brought tears several times to my eyes, as I bent over the embroidery with which I was amusing myself; and my mother's plaintive face grew yet more sadly beautiful as she listened.

We were thus engaged, when a servant announced Sir Vivian Ap Howel. My mother, who always liked to see him, and had of late been wondering at his protracted absence, gave immediate directions that he should be admitted. In he came—and, for the first time since he had joined it, in the uniform of his corps, under a military riding cloak. He looked very haggard and pale, I thought, in it, but soldierly and even stately; and for the first time it struck me distinctly how much his figure was improved in the interval since I remembered him a sickly, crippled lad.

We all received him with marks of cordiality, but my mother alone without embarrassment. Both Sophia and I coloured. It was never absent from her mind that Vivian was acquainted with a degrading secret concerning her! As for

Digitized by Google

me, I flushed with the warmth of the satisfaction I really felt at my youthful friend's reappearance.

I noticed that our visitor only bowed to Sophia. He shook my hand with an electric tingling of the nerves in his own, which I felt through my whole frame. Then, hastening to my mother's couch, he kissed her's tenderly and respectfully, as was his wont, and snatching up little Herbert, whom the jingle of his spurs had awakened, he began tossing him in the air, laughing and imitating the crowing of a cock so admirably that the little fellow's attention was instantly caught, and he desisted from his evident opening towards a good cry. In a few moments Vivian was answering to its tiny babblings, as if they thoroughly understood one another, with the child on his knee—snatching intervals to explain to my mother that his regiment was to embark on the following day, and that as she had expressed a wish to see him in his uniform, he had ridden over from Ap Howel in it.

"So now you will be able," he said to her, but looking at me, "to form a pretty exact idea of how I shall look when I am lying with my feet to the foe—if that is to be my fate—or

Digitized by Google

when I am holding a durbar to receive the submission of emirs and soldans, out of number, was a general and a conqueror—both which I intend to be, or ever I return to the shadow of Snowdon! Sha'n't I look a plain fellow, Mrs. Luxmoor, among robes of cloth of gold and diamonded turbans?"

"Your sword, which I take it for granted will be naked, Brennus-like, in your hand, will diffuse sufficient lustre around you," was her reply.

"I wonder how I shall find *you* all when I return?" Vivian said, fixing, what seemed to me, a strangely inquiet, piercing—even menacing gaze on Sophia!

"You will have to seek *me* in Pomeroy vaults, I fear, Vivian!" said my mother.

"But I shall not look for you there!" he answered, with an intensely compassionate and regretful look. "I shall look upwards!—and if I do not see you then, it will be because we are all very short-sighted heavenward! And you, Mrs. Pomeroy! (he did not seem to dislike so much to call me by that name) where shall you be?"

"At the gate of my house, wherever it may be, to welcome home the kindest and most

Digitized by Google

generous of friends—and so will Scarlatt!" I said, with all the warmth of the sincere gratitude I felt towards this disinterested and energetic young ally.

His brow brightened at the first part of this speech—darkened at its close. There was a remarkable and emphatic pause in the conversation which Sophia broke, rather startlingly, by observing, "I am afraid *we* shall not be at Llanhowel, Sir Vivian!" But no comment was made, and after a time the dialogue took a more general turn. The particulars of Vivian's intended departure and voyage formed the principal subject, and I remember he dilated with satisfaction on the probabilities of a speedy breaking-out of hostilities in India, and the chances of his regiment being speedily engaged in active service.

The visit appeared to us all to be cut abruptly short. A distant sound of shouting came to our ears, which Sophia quietly observed she supposed announced the return of Lord Mauleverer and the successful candidate through our neighbouring village—where, however, they were expected to receive congratulations and reply to a speech over the broaching of a monster beer-

Digitized by Google

barrel. And he arose abruptly. "I left my horse with a ragged urchin of seven only, at the forest entrance of the park," he said, rather hurriedly. "It is a full-blooded, wild creature —and the noise will startle it. I must be gone!"

My mother was much surprised. "You will surely stay and see Lord Mauleverer and congratulate Mr. Su—Mr. Pomeroy?"

"No, Lady Mauleverer!" he replied, with a tart smile; "don't you know I am an anti-corn-law man? and besides, I take part with poor old Suett in the affair, and can't think his son —although he *is* your son-in-law!—at all right, in flinging him from the saddle to mount in his place! I cannot congratulate *Mr. Pomeroy* sincerely—so I won't at all! But as I am a knight going to win my spurs, I ought to be escorted towards the lists by the fair! Will you not accompany me a few steps to my steed, ladies?"

Sophia expressed her acquiescence at once; and struck with Ap Howel's air of calm irritation, which I had seen break out so formidably on a previous occasion, I thought it desirable to assent to the proposed movement. I was

Digitized by Google

besides, assailed with the conviction that there was something of mysterious significance in Sir Vivian's manner, as if he had a communication of an unusual nature to make to me.

He took an affectionate farewell of my mother —on her part it was even a solemn one—for she gave him her blessing as to a son about to depart to scenes of danger, and whom she was never likely to see again. He kissed little Herbert, once more fallen asleep, and shook Gelert's huge paws, placidly resigned to him— and we three left the apartment.

Sophia also seemed to think that Sir Vivian wished to speak privately with me. She did not accept the offer of his other arm, after we had strolled out into the park. She made some pretence to linger behind—her boot lace came unknotted !—and allowed us to gain considerably in advance.

Ap Howel walked fast, as if proud to show with what a firm, military tread he could now advance. But when, missing her, he glanced back, he muttered to himself "I thought so !" in a sarcastic and scornful tone.

I soon found that my surmises were correct. With the directness that was part of his charac-

Digitized by Google

ter, Vivian told me had not wished to wait my father's arrival, lest he should be forced on an explanation he did not desire to make. And producing a note in Lord Mauleverer's handwriting, I found, to my very great chagrin, and even shame, I must confess, that my husband had shown so little sense of the gratitude we both owed Sir Vivian, as to have communicated to my father the fact that although present, and assisting even officiously as a witness, to our first marriage at the Kerig y Drudion, the youth was then and all along aware of my identity! And my father stated that Scarlatt named *Mrs. Luxmoor* as his authority, she having from my very first arrival at Plas Newydd taken Sir Vivian, and Sir Vivian alone, into her confidence! And Scarlatt proved his assertion by the fact, that it was he who secretly posted her letter to Lord Mauleverer abroad, and throughout was the sole person intrusted in any way in the affair.

On acquiring this information, it appeared, my father had written to Sir Vivian for an explanation, professing himself utterly unable to devise one for himself, but declaring that, until the matter was cleared up, he could not see him

Digitized by Google

again on the terms of friendship that had hitherto existed between them. Adding this reflection, which among any other race and class of men, would have been an absurdity almost amounting to insanity—Did he think thus to revenge the indignity an ancestor of the Pomeroys had inflicted on an Ap Howel, already so amply retaliated!—by extinguishing the line of Mauleverer in a plebeian one so distasteful to himself as that of the Suetts!

"So I take this epistle as a sentence of perpetual exclusion from Mauleverer!—for how can I tell your father the real reasons of my conduct—so little, as it seems, he has yet forgiven your husband! Can I say to him the truth? Dare I even repeat it now to yourself, Mrs. Pomeroy?—But as it is probably for the last time we shall speak together, I may reiterate that it was my sincere opinion—I laboured under the delusion, you will think!—that there was a conspiracy to secure you as a prey among the Suetts, and I thought it very possible—No! I will not pursue the subject, since it seems to distress you so much!—But, at all events, I am aware that if Lord Mauleverer knew I had assisted at your wild nuptials—had even im-

Digitized by Google

peratively required them to take place—with the means of prevention in my hands, even at the sacrifice of the man's life who had ensnared you —Indeed to this hour I marvel how I controlled the dreadful impulse rising in my heart!—Yet what could it have availed since you loved him! —'with your whole heart! with your whole soul!'—annihilating words, that are as it were burned into my own!—Pardon me, Mrs. Pomeroy! I am aware these are not expressions I should use to you—or that you should hear from me! But I have an excuse to plead—I go, sincerely proposing to *return no more!* But do you not now think it is as well I should depart without seeing Mr. Scarlatt Suett—Mr. Pomeroy—your *husband,* Hugh-Helena!—again?"

I was a good deal confused—but I answered in the affirmative to this query without hesitation! What struck me, however—I cannot say most painfully, but most surprisingly, in the revelation, was the fact that Scarlatt assigned Mrs. Luxmoor as his authority in the truly unkind and ungrateful statements made to my father. "It is impossible!" I could not help involuntarily exclaiming. "Scarlatt has never had an opportunity to acquire this information

Digitized by Google

from Mrs. Luxmoor, either at home or abroad, since our marriage! Let us question her herself!—It is impossible."

"She is lagging a good way in the rear!" said Vivian, pausing and flashing his keen bright eyes in the direction of Sophia's distant figure. "Innocent, harmless soul! she is stopping to admire the lambkins sporting among the buttercups!—If buttercups were sovereigns, what a Proserpine amid the fields of Enna should we have in her to gather them! Yet I think the King of Tartarus himself should hesitate, before he took possession of such a prize!" And he laughed with his clear, bright, ringing—and yet melancholy laugh—very briefly, and with an effect about the reverse of mirthful upon me. The scorn and incredulity mingled in it besides, annoyed me.

"You ought to be the last to rail so bitterly against Mrs. Luxmoor, Sir Vivian!" I said. "She is always chaunting your praises, and reciting your good and generous actions!—till one is almost tired of hearing them!"

"Is she?—thank her!—I am not much of a pedant, Mrs. Pomeroy, but I think I may quote to you in plain English, *that I dread the de-*

Digitized by Google

scendants of Danaus even bearing rich gifts!" Vivian replied, still laughingly; but his tone changed to one of the utmost earnestness and seriousness, as he added, "I intended in reality to have given you a warning on the subject of that kind friend of yours, Mrs. Pomeroy! Only I am like that raving girl of Troy, whose prophecies were always disbelieved—and always fulfilled! Yet take some heed of what I say! Don't have Sophia Sutcliffe—Luxmoor that is!—too much about you. I am sure she is not a good woman, say what she will!—appear regularly in her pew on Sundays as she may! Just you believe me for once, Hugh-Helena! without waiting for anything so deplorable as proofs would be in this case! I tell you, Sophia Luxmoor—Sophy, as I, too, call her now again!—is too talented, too discontented, too unprincipled, too unfortunate—not to desire to change her condition at the expense of any one, of any right, of any duty!—Beware of her!"

"How barbarously, how cruelly unjust you are, Sir Vivian!—when you must have witnessed—what every one witnesses—with what unfailing patience and submission she drains her bitter

Digitized by Google

cup!—endures all the infidelity and brutality of the wretch her husband!"

"That's the very reason I am so afraid of her!—She *crouches* to *spring*. Hers is the calm of the boa constrictor, wreathed in his coils, awaiting the tramp of the horse or of the bullock near his springs. The bullock she has already in Squire Gawker!—but she despises him too much to compromise herself with him! And besides he is poor—and the poor, I think, will always be safe from our friend, Sophy! I do believe," he added, laughing again in that strange, nerve-tingling way of his, "poverty is my own chief protection against her sorceries! If ever I am rich, I shall take good care to keep out of her company!—why, Hugh-Helena! you don't know—she is the very kind of woman most men prefer!—for most men are mere sensualists with regard to women—and though Sophia has a good deal of brain, too, she knows how to hide it, and appear at pleasure the delightful fool we like you all best to be!"

"I wonder—I do wonder—Sir Vivian, you can take delight in annoying me with these causeless insinuations!" I said, and tears, I know, sprang to my eyes. "But," I added, with

Digitized by Google

vehemence, "do not carry away with you the notion that I intend to add the withdrawal of my friendship to poor Sophia's calamities! I know it would be one to her!—and I am almost certain some catastrophe is at hand in her relations with Luxmoor—and where then will she find refuge but with me?"

"Then, if you give it her, think you hear Ensign Cassandra repeating his warning again and again from over the Indian Seas!" returned Vivian, with singular earnestness. "I should not like to be in the way of her recoil, I can tell you, when once that explosion—which I foresee, also—takes place! Oh, Sophia is too young—too fraught with ardent passions—too richly endowed with powers of the mind—to take to the life of calm delights and sisterly communion you doubtless image for yourself with her! Don't fancy she will or can be take herself to a cool retirement in a grotto, after having lived in a furnace with Luxmoor! And she is of the kind of women who take their vengeance on the society that has trampled and ill-used them! And, above all, she is too proud to *forgive a benefit!* Confer none on her, then. But I know I am giving words to the winds. What must be, will be! *O beth y*

Digitized by Google

wnaf fi! How often shall I think I hear those anguished words over the bitter waves, in vain!"

As he uttered this vaticination in tones of inexpressible mournfulness and tenderness, Sophia, observing we had stopped for her, rejoined us. "I thought you might have some private communication to make to Mrs. Pomeroy, on matters of business: do I interrupt?" she then observed, with perfect simplicity of look and tone. "Pardon me, Sir Vivian; Mrs. Pomeroy has told me with what magnanimous generosity you have behaved throughout these late affairs!"

"Nay, now, Sophy; Mrs. Pomeroy never made use of any such fine phrase. She is incapable of it!" Vivian replied; but, nevertheless, his pale cheek flamed joyfully at the words. "Well, if it be so—if Mrs. Pomeroy thinks she owes me any thanks—I have gained the only recompense that I value, in human gift! Peerages and stars are nothing to me compared! Nay, they do not enter at all into my ambition. I want to be heard of with renown; to do some famous thing in the world—perhaps the world itself some great good; and then—and then—to die regretted by the women!" he concluded, laughing again, but at

Digitized by Google

the same time bursting into a shower of tears: indeed he wept, and sobbed, and laughed together for several minutes, almost like a young girl in an hysterical paroxysm. I'm sure Sophia and I joined him in the demonstration, hardly knowing why! The poor youth was, however, infinitely ashamed of the exhibition of what he doubtless considered an unmanly weakness; and I saw him searching for a handkerchief in his breast and coat pockets, to remove the hot blotches from his cheeks—seemingly in vain. I handed him my own, therefore, at last; which he received with a kind of avidity, and hid his face in it for some moments, while he yielded to an irresistible climax of nervous sensibility.

He regained the mastery of himself, however, in a short interval, and his laughing causticity and frankness of expression. For putting the bedewed handkerchief in his breast, he said, "I will wear it as an amulet. It was not *wrought by an Egyptian, Sophy!*" he added, with peculiar meaning—alluding, no doubt, to the handkerchief of Desdemona—"so there is no harm in my taking it, you know! If I am shot, Mrs. Pomeroy, you may depend it will be in the

Digitized by Google

breast; and I will then certainly order them to bring you your handkerchief home again, as a token that I thought of you as long as I could think at all! That is, supposing I have the power of speech; if not, you will make allowances, when you see my name in the black list! But perhaps they will try and persuade you—because you are a Suett-Pomeroy now!—that you ought to pray for such an event—for a Sikh scimetar to send my head dancing, before I am twenty-one! Well! perhaps it would be as well for myself also! I shall take no pains to keep out of the way of either steel or lead. But here is my war-steed, Rhaiadr Dhu! What do you think of him?"

"That I envy you your ride upon him, in the midst of the thunder of battle, over a field of carnage and death, into the heart of a thousand spears!" Sophia replied, with a fierce flashing energy I had never before discerned in her.

"Poor woman! and you can do nothing but sit at home, and write pretty nonsense with a parrot-quill!" said Ap Howel; adding, in softened tones, "Well, poor Sophy! after all, your's is a very hard fate! But do be a good girl! *Don't*

Digitized by Google

hurt anything I am fond of, dear, till I come back again; and, upon my soul! I will make you so well off then, that you shall not have necessity to plead for any harmful doings afterwards."

"Do not come home sick of battles, and anxious to change your red coat for a black one; and I owe enough already to your liberality, Sir Vivian!" Sophia replied, and in a really moved tone.

"You don't suppose the Reverend Carolus would consider himself bound by an agreement which could not be enforced—Eh, Sophy?" returned Vivian, evidently amused at the idea; and by this time we were all standing by the beautiful black charger the young officer had devoted a considerable portion of his then scanty savings to purchase. He turned now to bid me farewell, and while Sophia, quietly drawing off her glove, averted her head in patting the glossy arched neck of the steed—I know not any reason why I should conceal the fact—Vivian, gently drawing me by the hand I had given towards him, for the first time in his life, touched his lips to mine!—quivering, indeed, with emo-

Digitized by Google

tion in all their fibres, but with a kiss whose evanescent tenderness spoke only of an eternal and hopeless farewell!

He meant this certainly himself. "Forgive—for I shall never even hear of you again, Hugh-Helena! if I can help it," he said, as he sprang with remarkable agility and grace on his steed, without the aid of the stirrup; "I shall have no correspondents left in England now, excepting my lawyers; and I shall trouble them as seldom as I can. But God bless you, happen what may to me, and always!—What, Sophia, and have I omitted to say farewell to you while I was on terra firma?"

"I can shake hands with you on horseback, Sir Vivian. It is not the first time that we have been on *cavalier* terms!" said Sophia, smilingly; and it needed a thorough knowledge of her character and feelings to understand how deeply wounded she was by this neglect. And Ap Howel shook her hand in a careless and oblivious sort of way, until suddenly, as if startled into recollection, he stooped and gave her quite a country sweetheart's smack of a kiss on both cheeks, exclaiming, "There! that you

Digitized by Google

may tell no tales!" and setting his horse into a fierce curvet with a touch of his spur, and giving me a glance so full of an inexpressible chaos of emotions that I was in a manner struck silent, he waved his hand and disappeared as if shot from sight, on his swift steed's forward dash!

"I am glad he is gone, too! What a curious youth he is! Quite a puzzle in all he says or does!" said Sophia, in her usual tone, almost immediately after, while I remained gazing transfixed. "What can he mean by all these strange warnings and recommendations of his?" And she added, in a deep thoughtful tone, these words—words that dwelt long upon my memory. "He is really, at times, the kind of man that one would *like to kill!* Yet, happy, happy were the woman who could merit and obtain the love of a heart like that!—What a soul of honour and chivalrous sentiment dwells in that young breast! With him love would indeed be an affair of the *heart!*—With almost all other men, and many women, too, it is as our old sentimental friend, Madame Le Crampon, might well say—*tout autre!*"

Digitized by Google

I had determined not to mention the affair of Lord Mauleverer's letter to any one else; but from Sophia I thought I had a right to demand and receive explanations. I did not stop to consider that a confidential communication between Vivian and myself had not been at all calculated on by my husband!

Sophia gave one, however, that seemed quite satisfactory. "Luxmoor must have been the reporter!" she said, without thinking it necessary, as it seemed, to deny for herself. "I think he often listens craftily about the house when I have visitors, and Sir Vivian called on me one day last week and—among other matters—we spoke of the Plas Newydd affair, and the aid he had afforded me—so uselessly—in keeping the secret from the Suetts!"

"A week ago! Has he been so long at Ap Howel?"

"Yes, a whole week: but this affair has no doubt hindered him from visiting at Mauleverer, and I must say—were it of any other man than your husband, my dear friend!—it is the shabbiest, poorest return for almost unequalled

Digitized by Google

generosity and kindness, *not* on record in the annals of social man !"

I felt that it was as she had said. Yet I could not patiently bear so stinging a reflection on my still beloved husband, and I answered Sophia with a haughtiness of reproof she had never yet experienced from my lips. It silenced her—and we parted with very unusual mutual coldness and reserve that night.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VIII.

STRANGE BUT TRUE!

SOPHIA'S misfortunes were, however, destined to retrieve for her speedity all my attachment and sympathy.

A messenger arrived at Mauleverer late one evening with really fearful tidings from Llanhowel! It was a poor old man, much attached to Mrs. Luxmoor, who had retained him as sexton in her husband's parish, in spite of his wish to put a drunken vagabond, with whom he made acquaintance in a tap house, in his place. And this man brought a message from her, at considerable rish to himself personally, imdloring assistance to rescue her husband from the fury of his own parishioners!

Digitized by Google

It appeared he had been detected in a most scandalous series of outrages on several of the young girls in the school she had organized; and the father of one of the maltreated children had raised the whole village in a determination to stone their unworthy pastor out of it! But according to the report, Luxmoor had barricaded himself with his wife and two female servants in the parsonage, and being well armed with a gun and two pistols, which he ordered the women, under threat of their own lives, to keep constantly loaded, swore he would there maintain himself against them all! As the wretch was now perfectly desperate, and, as usual, under the influence of intoxicating liquors, with which he continued to ply himself, while the villagers were in an almost frenzied state of exasperation, the most dreadful mischiefs were to be apprehended, unless some authoritative interference took place!

It was Sophia who secretly despatched the sexton to entreat me to induce either my father or husband—who were both in the commission of the peace—to hasten with such assistance as they had at hand to quell the disturbance, and rescue Luxmoor from the fury of the mob!

Digitized by Google

Not at all to my satisfaction, however convincing a proof that he had not feigned his total change of feeling towards Sophia, Scarlatt, to whom I hastened at once with this disastrous intelligence, received it with the utmost coolness and indifference! "I don't believe two words of it—women so exaggerate! Or if there is a row, it is all Mrs. Luxmoor's *insane jealousy* and persecution of her husband have brought it about! He has himself told me how frantically she goes on about him—to *cover her own* doings!—a thousand times! To interfere would only be to countenance her absurdities! And, besides, if Luxmoor is really guilty of such detestable misconduct, I renounce him altogether; and he may get out of his scrape as he has got into it!"

My father had been quietly listening with a newspaper in his hand, but he now started up with very unusual suddenness and vivacity. "But Mrs. Luxmoor! what will become of the poor woman herself!" he exclaimed. "I care very little for her husband's fate—in fact, if I can ascertain any truth in these accusations, I will send him to jail as I would the commonest and vilest of rogues and vagabonds charged with

Digitized by Google

the like offence! But I cannot suffer so *amiable and accomplished* a woman—and a friend of my daughter's!—to be placed in such jeopardy, by so infamous a scoundrel's conduct, for one moment! I shall go to Llanhowel at once—and all the men about the place that can find horses will accompany me! You can stay, Mr. Pomeroy, of course, if you don't think *your friend's* carcass worth the trouble of a gallop to rescue! And I confess I am myself a good deal of that opinion—but *people of my name* have not hitherto shown themselves so slack to assist their friends in danger!"

And he strode out of the room with as towering a step as any of his Norman ancestors might have gone forth to battle, in panoply of proof.

Scarlatt nevertheless made no attempt to follow. He turned to me with an angry and flushed countenance.

"Do you hear that?" he exclaimed, in a vehemently resentful tone. "Don't you see it is as I have long been hinting to you, only you will understand nothing that is not stuck up on the wall in letters a yard long! The old fool is fairly besotted with her! and, as usual, the first use she makes of her influence is to set people

Digitized by Google

against me! I have noticed that from the very instant she began to gain a footing here, your father began to think less and less of me!—until now, I believe, he fairly hates me again—and wants me to go and expose my life against a madman like Luxmoor! for the sake of a creature who, I know, has made up her mind to be the ruin of me!"

I was offended for several reasons—some of which I dared not present to myself in any tangible form—with this speech. It was very rarely that Scarlatt indulged his temper with such viperous outbreaks: they stung the more.

"So you call my father a fool, sir! And are *you* really of opinion that only a *fool* could take particular interest in Sophia?" I answered, too tartly, certainly. "But as to saying that she always uses her influence against you, I am sure her praises of you when I first knew you—were —must have been—frightfully exaggerated, quite the other way!"

"That is to be seen yet, Mrs. Pomeroy! I shall be happy to have your opinion, a little less prematurely, the day after I make my maiden speech in parliament!" replied Scarlatt, with that smile of his of other days—full, to say the

Digitized by Google

least, of an excessive self-appreciation. "But, as you say, Mrs. Luxmoor *is* a woman of talent!—some women have not even the talent to see talent where it is most obvious! and that is the reason why I dread her so much! So do all reasonable men—always dread women of talent! Poor Luxmoor had a good saying for that: Knowledge is power, *and power is the devil,* in a woman's hands! I am quite sure she is trying to set Lord Mauleverer against me! Only the other day, when he insisted so strangely on escorting her part of the way home to Llanhowel, and she would walk, though you know you had offered her a carriage—I saw them laughing quite heartily as they went—your father laughing, who hardly ever laughs! And as they passed me—I happened to be going along the other side of one of the hedges—I heard her say to his lordship: "I am no great admirer of those large, haunchy figures myself: they remind me too much of *state footmen out of livery*!"

"And did you suppose such an observation could apply to yourself?"

"She is capable of any thing! and I know she hates me. It could not otherwise be—"

Digitized by Google

but Scarlatt, suddenly interrupting himself, added, "I am quite sure she has taken Lord Mauleverer in tow out of pure hatred against *us* ! For she hates you too, Hugh-Helena ! you may depend upon it—Hugh-Helena ! I wonder how the deuce they came to think of giving you such an awkward double name !—as if you were both a man and a woman !—which I verily believe your friend, Sophia, is—she knows so well what both sides are at !"

"What, in heaven's name, are you talking about, Mr. Pomeroy? And what '*could not otherwise be ?*'" I exclaimed, in amazement.

"Pooh, pooh, and bah, bah !" replied my husband, insultingly enough: "as a woman of this world, you must know very well what I mean ! you must have observed how artfully she is creeping up your father's sleeve ! Pretty tight-fitting one at the wrists as it is ! Didn't you notice, last visit but one, how she prated about the siege Mauleverer sustained against Cromwell, as if she had been present at it ? I am sure you pricked your own ears high enough too, when his lordship asked her to show him the spot where the first Ap Howel and Mauleverer that had been friends for centuries

Digitized by Google

met with their tenantry to go to Worcester with Charles II.! She knows our whole genealogy better than we do ourselves—I mean the Pomeroy genealogy, of course—though I have studied it night and day for the heralds' people, when they were making me one! And haven't you noticed she shows off chiefly to his lordship —when I am not there? Didn't I hear her the other day in the cedar drawing-room, singing what she persuades you all is one of her own songs and musical composition, when she knew Lord Mauleverer was sitting listening, with the library doors open, with all his might?"

I had noticed that Sophia rarely "showed off" before my husband. But I did not think it so very singular. "You always behave so churlishly to Mrs. Luxmoor!—depreciate everything she does so much!" I observed.

"Well, *he* don't—Lord Mauleverer don't—and I can tell you he has gone now at some risk to interfere in Luxmoor's affairs—for Luxmoor already suspects something too!"

I lost patience. "What, in the name of everything absurd, am I to understand from all this, Scarlatt? that you suspect my father—my friend—of being capable—what *do* you mean?"

Digitized by Google

"Don't go into hysterics, and I'll tell you plainly enough! Sophia *knows I despise* her, and is determined on revenge!—and if her husband is so much disliked by her as you seem to say, she will do anything to get rid of him—and the only way for that, is to give him a chance of making money by getting rid of her! I know that of old! In plain English, I suspect her of a design to entrap your father! Luxmoor has warned me of it repeatedly, before now, in the most friendly manner—though it is against his own interests!—for of course immense damages could be got out of Lord Mauleverer! But, after all, poor fellow! I believe he is very fond of her—terribly jealous of other people!—though he is not able quite to behave himself with regard to the sex in general!"

"Poor fellow!" I repeated, mockingly. "But if you men extend to one another so much kind forbearance in judgment, I think you might display ever so little towards a persecuted, ill-used, shamefully-betrayed creature like Sophia. And allow me, in addition, to tell you, Mr. Pomeroy, that you have quite mistaken my father's character, who, whatever his other faults towards

Digitized by Google

my mother, has never shown himself an unfaithful husband to her. And to prove that my confidence in Sophia is sincere, I shall this very moment dispatch the only man we have left in the castle—my mother's page—excepting yourself, of course—with my most earnest request to her to make Mauleverer her home and asylum as long as ever she pleases!"

I believe it was my first decided contradiction to anything my husband chose to expect. But I was excessively irritated.

"Do so, and ruin us all! She will have Lord Mauleverer and myself by the ears before she has been a month in the castle!"

I was too much shocked and disgusted with what at the same time I considered to be the outrageously absurd suspicions and suggestions of my husband, to hesitate at all in the execution of the purpose I announced. Yet I own these reiterated warnings, from quarters so opposed, began to produce some effect upon me. After I had despatched my messenger, I even began to contemplate the possibility of Sophia's arrival and sojourn at Mauleverer, with a species of dismay. And I confess it was not without relief that I found my father returned to the castle—

Digitized by Google

after a protracted stay of some hours at Llanhowel—alone.

The villagers, it appeared, had not ventured to carry out their first resolution, deterred by the furious menaces and mortal weapons of their vile pastor. He had accordingly sustained his siege with little damage, excepting that all the windows of the parsonage were broken by two women who were suspected to have peculiar reasons for despising danger in their exasperation—until my father arrived with his little improvisated troop of cavalry. And only just in time to rescue Sophia from really the greatest personal peril! Luxmoor had by some means ascertained that she had communicated out of doors, and concluding at once—naturally enough—that she had sent to summon assistance against him—openly avowed his determination to take her life! She had scarcely time to flee and bar herself in one of the garrets—the door of which the wretch, insane with drunkenness, and consciousness of total ruin and disgrace, was essaying to batter down, like a furious bull, by driving his short but massive body against it: the servant girls were screaming for assistance without being able to induce the panic-stricken rustics to afford any when Lord Mauleverer arrived.

Digitized by Google

My father lost not a moment in forcing open the doors, and he himself headed the rescuing party up the stairs. Luckily Luxmoor had laid aside his firearms, conceiving an axe he had taken from the coal-cellar, better adapted for his murderous purposes. He was therefore secured without so much difficulty as might have been apprehended, being, in fact, so much inebriated, as to fall headlong down the stairs in a rush to regain his weapons, supposing the onslaught to be from the villagers. But he had still the cunning, on recognising Lord Mauleverer, to assume at once all the style of an injured man; and declare that his wife's jealousy had provoked the tumult quite causelessly! He had the impudence to appeal to Lord Mauleverer himself as a friend, who must be aware that it was quite impossible for him, a man of education and character, to have disgraced his cloth in the manner imputed to him!

Sophia, poor soul! was found crawling, at the most imminent risk of her life, out on the parapet of the garret window—with the intention, as she told my father, rather of precipitating herself into the churchyard below, than of falling into the power of the brutish madman raging at the door

Digitized by Google

of her place of refuge. I have seldom seen my father more moved than he was in describing the excess of her gratitude to him for his timely interposition! And it appeared that her patience was at last fairly worn out! Luxmoor had, indeed, still the confidence to appeal to her to bear witness that she did not believe in the accusations of his enemies—that she was herself present in the schoolroom during the whole period of his alleged misconduct! But very properly, she turned from him in utter disdain and repupudiation! And then it appeared he had the insane malignity to accuse her of heading a conspiracy formed for the express purpose of ousting him from his parish, and bringing in a young curate—whom he declared the patron—another of her favourites!—Sir Vivian Ap Howel, had previously endeavoured to introduce. Nor did he hesitate to accuse her of the most criminal motives and objects in the organization of this design! Even of having purposely provided him with extra means of intoxication, by leaving the keys of her cellars in his way!

Lord Mauleverer, disgusted beyond measure, directed the depositions of the witnesses to be made before him at once, and in spite of all

Digitized by Google

Luxmoor's clamour of a conspiracy—that his wife was skilled in conspiracies!—words which, however, my father repeated before both Scarlatt and myself, with bitter emphasis!—he consigned him at once to jail on the dreadful and infamous charges fully substantiated against him!

But when this vile man was taken off, and Lord Mauleverer proffered an asylum in his house to the injured wife, backed by my mother's and my own earnest invitation, which arrived in the interim—she gratefully but most decisively declined it! She could not endure, she said, to remain in that part of the country during the exposures that must follow on the detection of her miserable husband. They would involve a woful display of indecision and almost criminal sufferance on her own part. The forfeiture of her husband's position was inevitable—but she did not imagine herself altogether destitute of the means of living apart from him, on her own industry. She proposed to go at once to London . . . existence would be insupportable to her, if she remained where she was! And my father briefly stated that he was convinced by her arguments, and sorry that he could not prevail upon her to accept any pecuniary assistance to

Digitized by Google

enable her to proceed to the metropolis. But, he added,—still more carelessly—indignant at the dreadful maltreatment the unfortunate woman had sustained from her villanous husband, he had offered her the aid of his purse and influence in any measures of redress or liberation she might find it possible to adopt, on consultation with the most eminent London practitioners of the law. *And this she had accepted.*

But this indifferent tone deceived not Scarlatt —if, indeed, it was intended to deceive any one. No sooner were we alone, than he burst out, "I see it all now, I see it all now, Hugh-Helena! The plan is to get a divorce from Luxmoor, and then for her to *marry your father!*"

I stared at him in complete bewilderment. "Are you mad?" I asked at last. "Do you not know that my father is a husband already! —the husband of my mother!—if even Mrs. Luxmoor were set free to marry any one this hour!"

"But you must know your mother's life is not worth six months' purchase; and if Luxmoor has behaved himself so atrociously, I suppose he comes pretty well up to the standard

Digitized by Google

at which they grant divorces to women! And though it might be a difficult matter, certainly; yet if Sophia is thoroughly well backed with money and influence, she may obtain a divorce, I say! I know they have granted women divorces sometimes; and I dare say it is quite as much their own stupid endurance, and clinging to fellows that serve them so desperately bad, as the difficulty and the expense, that have made them so few hitherto."

"Heaven prosper her in the attempt to divorce herself from the abomination of such a monster's association!"

"But don't you see what will happen then? She is quite a young woman still. She will have children—male heirs both to the title and the estates! Luxmoor himself has confessed to me, that but for that row about the Cambridge woman he should have been a father; though he said he detests children and their squalling, and did not regret it one bit! It was when I showed him little Herbert first!"

"Unnatural ruffian!"

"You had much better join with me against *her* than against *him*," said Scarlatt. "But if the worst comes to the worst," he added, venge-

Digitized by Google

fully, "I know a trick to stop her. I shall let Lord Mauleverer know what a life she led at Cambridge, and all her inveigling artifices to me!"

"Cambridge!" I exclaimed.

"Yes. Luxmoor can tell a pretty story of her doings there! I suppose she has persuaded you she left him because she was ill-treated by him there—not because she misbehaved herself so shockingly, that he turned her out of doors?"

"Do you think I would believe one word so depraved a wretch can say against the woman he has so basely injured—whose fair fame itself he now wishes to lie away? Who could believe so atrocious a calumniator, when, by his own showing, were all that he alleges true, he must be the most infamous of men to have taken her back again!"

"Oh, Luxmoor's faults have been caused altogether by *his domestic unhappiness!* And the poor fellow is not to blame for having taken her back! The truth is, he dotes upon her, and forgave her everything. He could not live without her! She is a very fascinating woman —you must see that. But no sooner was she settled comfortably at Llanhowel, than she took

Digitized by Google

to all her old courses again! You should hear what Squire Gawker says of her, now she has cut him for her speculation on your father!"

"Neither would I credit what a disappointed fool and knave, like that fellow, may give out! But you have assuredly as rapid an imagination as it is at all necessary for a solid statesman to possess, Scarlatt!—since you have divorced Mrs. Luxmoor—consigned my mother to the grave—and married her to my father, the proudest of aristocrats—a woman without station, birth, wealth—all in a breath!"

"Well, but I'll take care they shall not find the divorce so easy! As for your mother, even if she were quite well, I confess I should not like mine to be a life in the way of Sophia's attainment of a coronet!"

"What a most dreadful idea! What has she done to merit suspicions too horrible to be formed even of the most notorious criminals?"

"Is she not separated from her husband, or will soon be?"

"Has she not cause?"

"That don't matter. Every woman who leaves her husband must be a bad one!"

Digitized by Google

I did not perceive the logic of this, and I told him so.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, pettishly. "She is teaching you to chop logic, is she, too?—persuading you your husband is not fit to be your guide and adviser in everything? But if you are so determined to side with her—all of you," he added, after some reflection, and with a visible reanimation of countenance, "we had better really have her at Mauleverer! She will be less dangerous here than at a distance. Go yourself, and try to prevail upon her to come!"

I was surprised at this sudden change in my husband's humour; but it coincided so much with my own wishes, and the really utter incredulity I felt in Scarlatt's insinuations, that I agreed to the proposal at once.

Accordingly, on the following morning, as early as I could manage it, I drove over to Llanhowel. But the bird was flown, and instead of my friend, I found a letter from her directed to me, which one of the whimpering handmaids handed over to me.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IX.

EX-TENEBRIS.

"DEAREST Mrs. Pomeroy!" this letter ran: "aware of the generous goodness of your heart—dreading your influence over my own—I have not dared to await the entreaties with which I know you will endeavour to prevail upon me to accept the kind proffer I have already declined.

"I have several reasons for this—but will not one suffice when I tell you I am convinced, in my own heart, that I take misfortune with me wherever I go? You have all been too good to me at Mauleverer—your saintly mother, your dear self, your truly noble father—noblest even in my heraldry, which is not that of Garter King at Arms!—for me to hazard bringing with me

Digitized by Google

there the sorrowful company I am assured will henceforth dog my steps through existence!

"Do not ask me the reasons of these convictions; they are rather instincts, sure presentiments! The rest of my days are doomed to struggle and misery: let me not bring upon others dear to me what I can alone suffer—perhaps alone ought to suffer! It is, I repeat, a crime to have loved such a man! And did not that honestest and most generous of youths bid me at parting spare what was most dear to him? Who is dearer than you are!—than your sweet children are—than all your house have ever been?

"Moreover, I do not say it by way of reproach, but Lord Mauleverer has stated to me what Mr. Pomeroy, your husband, was pleased to say and do on the occasion of my application for assistance on his friend's behalf. Luxmoor is indeed unworthy of all sympathy and aid—but still, still I cannot make up my heart to become a guest where such maxims of friendship are in vogue! It is not a mere machine of circulation! It would not permit me so calmly to have allowed one whom even I *detested* to be torn to pieces by an infuriate mob!—No more of that.

Digitized by Google

"It must be admitted, I think, at last—that Luxmoor has a little exceeded even the *just privileges* of his sex. I have never pretended—at least of latter times—to his fidelity! We cannot—we ought not, according to some reasoners — to expect to confine such variety-loving creatures as men in the pales they have themselves made, but so easily vault over—*We* are to be fixed as rocks in constancy to them: for it is only we who can do the harm in families, you know! We alone can taint the 'purity of the domestic hearth'—we alone introduce a 'spurious offspring' into the house! Of course, it is nothing that we are aware the guardian of all these domestic sanctities has just left the arms of a paramour: that children, who have a right to call him sire, but stranger-women mother, dwell under another roof, almost purified by their presence! *We* only can despoil the true heirs of their inheritance! Men cannot! They have it in their power, it is true, to leave not only their own possessions, but ours also, to the children of the strange woman—to the woman herself—whom, by a beautiful provision of nature, they seem always to prefer to 'honest Madam' and her issue!—I have indeed seen with my own eyes

Digitized by Google

a will in which Luxmoor left all the savings of my care from his prodigality to his goodly brood at the university, which he ever in words has disowned! But what matter facts against established legal fictions?—I admit all these truths. Still, wide as is the latitude men allow to each other, it does really appear that there are limits to it! Luxmoor's infamy is now open and apparent: of a kind that the utmost stretch of indulgence could not, without sharing, pardon! Surely if there be justice for woman against man, it cannot be denied me! The bond between us, which God is said to have joined, has become one of pollution and ignominy! Can God sanction these?

"And have I not borne sufficiently with this man—this demon, Hugh-Helena? What you have yourself witnessed is as nothing—a drop from the great ocean—to all I have endured!

"There is scarcely a crime in the decalogue, whose solemn forbiddings it was Luxmoor's duty weekly to give forth, to an insulted congregation perfectly cognisant of his depravity, of which he has not been guilty, or attempted to be guilty! Epicurus's sty never produced a more wallowing sensualist than he! He is notoriously a drunkard, a profligate of the worst order—an adul-

Digitized by Google

terer! I have lived in constant terror, lest he should profane my roof—almost my very presence—by some enormity! At his pleasure he has treated me with the most contemptuous neglect, or compelled submission to the most degrading and disgusting impulses of his furibund animal nature, excited by drink and constitutional recklessness beyond all restraints! My person even—you have witnessed—has not been sacred from perhaps less unmanly blows and spurns! The vilest abuse language could be cast into, by a ribald blasphemer, skilled in all its abuses, has been heaped upon me! Forbidden to look to religion itself for a consolation—for what hope or meaning could there be to me in a religion that Luxmoor preached?—I have been driven to the verge of perhaps my own eternal condemnation—to the meditation of suicide—by the overwhelming and remediless nature of my wrongs! And shall it be said that my measure is not yet filled up, and that I have no right to demand of divine and human justice redemption from a monster's power like this?

"From the very first what has this husband—if he is still to be called such—been to me? He found me, I will admit, causelessly impatient and discontented with my position in the world—

Digitized by Google

anxious for higher fortunes in it than I had apparently any right to expect; vain, coquettish, conceited with an air-blown opinion of my own claims and advantages. But he had from me all that the best of men can pretend to, from a woman whom he makes his wife: a love that was more than a passion: a kind of tenderness so largely mixed with homage, that it seemed rather a kind of adoration! I had all the ignorance of schools about me—and he appeared to me a wise man: as if a bad man ever was a wise one! I gloried in his abilities—I imagined him more than all you doubtless still deem your husband, saving that no illusion could represent him to me under externals so brilliant! Some phantom is surely permitted to roam the world, and present to the eyes of women whatever is most attractive to each; to lure us to our doom! It vanishes, with all its attributes, when we have once surrendered ourselves into the iron clasp of destiny! I imagined Luxmoor almost godlike in intellect! I have awoke, and found that he is only a profligate college professor!

"Yet, even when I knew how much I had been deceived, it cannot be denied that I laboured most strenuously to make the best of my unhappy chance! I continued to love this man when I

Digitized by Google

could no longer form a delusion in connexion with him—for no other reason, perhaps, than because I *had* loved him! I devoured my heart in silence. I knew his infidelities and tolerated them! And worse than that! you remember how I told about his Cambridge mistress, or rather *mastress*—I think a new word ought to be coined in her favour! But you do not know all that happened there! It is my firm belief Luxmoor would have had me plunge myself in ignominy to assist in his riotous expenses, and leave myself at his mercy to repudiate me when he should think it for his interest or pleasure to select another victim! As for his yet more infamous conduct with the two Wrangham women, how could I avoid being aware of enormities enacted almost beneath my gaze? Yet I exhausted myself in efforts to hide these criminal excesses from the observation of those who ought to have pnnished them! You remember my interview with that poor archdeacon, where I denied all—persuaded him that all those true but anonymous accusations were false! Oh! believe me, it was hard work to go after such a cloven-footed beast (pardon the strong expressions I use—I have no time to choose gentler

Digitized by Google

ones, even had I still the temper!) and obliterate the filthy traces of his passage—sometimes through the whiteness of my own trampled reputation! Oh, heard you ever of so vile a husband? He even took a pleasure in throwing soot on his own wife's fair fame! There was the Gawker affair—but I cannot speak of that with any patience! The foolish fellow himself was sufficiently misled by Luxmoor's insinuations as to imagine he might have a prospect of success with me! And I own that he avowed a feeling for me which, while I repulsed it with the utmost contempt, satisfied me I was neither so old, so ugly, nor so unnoticeable in every sense as my husband's preferences might have induced me to believe. He was a poor wretch, too, that Gawker! He lent not a hand in any attempt to rescue me from that raging felon, during the whole dreadful scene, all of which he must have witnessed from his house! Had I treated any real *man*—such a one, for example, as young Ap Howel—with a thousand times the disdain—had I preferred to him the least worthy of all mankind—still he would have hazarded life and limb to rescue *any* woman from such danger! But one whom he had loved!—I declare to you your father appeared

Digitized by Google

to me like a veritable knight of the olden chivalry—a St. George, a Bayard—when he hazarded so much—his own life, in fact—to relieve me from my dreadful situation! I feel that I owe Lord Mauleverer gratitude, homage—if I dared say so without fear of being misconstrued—my *deepest love* and veneration to the last hour of my existence!

"Well, you know the result of all my pains—the total failure of all my efforts to cover in this steaming corruption, which has burst itself a way at last, and fills the whole air with its betraying stench! It is impossible that even the mild bishop, and my good friend, the archdeacon, can overlook so public and notorious a scandal. Your noble father himself, so conservative in all his opinions, pronounced, if there were another such priest in the Establishment, it would be necessary to make a new Reformation! Luxmoor will, in all probability, be branded with some infamous punishment, and turned out into the world a beggar and an outcast! And am I, who have not shared his crimes, except by attempting to palliate them, to share this vile wretch's punishment? Or, because I have unwittingly united myself to a

Digitized by Google

monster, am I to be condemned either to his detested society, or to live a solitary creature in the world, exposed to all the temptations, all the insults that assail women in such a position? Until my recent interview with your kind, your most generous, your *truly noble* father, I had deemed there was indeed no extrication for me! No earthly power, I thought, could free me from the body of that death! I imagined I was like the poor wretch in the eastern tale, married in a country where it was the custom to inter the living spouse with the dead one! I had hardly ever heard a case of a woman divorcing her husband!—though I had myself known many who would have had the right, and even who would have had the courage and resolution to exert it, but who still sat on the highways, hugging their chains, apparently powerless for redemption! I had been often assured of the practical indissolubility of marriage, so far as regards women, in all but cases of an infamy scarcely to be dreaded! But Lord Mauleverer, whose judgment and ripe maturity of wisdom and experience no one can dispute, seems to think that the time has arrived when a little extension of these rigid rules may be hoped for.

Digitized by Google

Luxmoor has not committed the crime which our wise lawgivers seem to consider the only one that renders a wicked man unfit for the society of the best of women—because I have no sister and no daughter—thanks to his own cruelty for this latter! But surely mine *is* a special case; and, though parliament hitherto has only granted divorces to women three or four times in the course of a century, Lord Mauleverer thinks it is impossible they can refuse a release in this case! His lordship has even most kindly undertaken, if it can be brought to such a stage, to take charge of a bill for my relief in the House of Lords. Moreover, as the expenses will be great, infinitely beyond any resources I can possibly command—with a really unexampled generosity—unexampled but for one exception! your best of fathers has offered to be at the whole cost of the suit in conducting it through the necessary preliminary stages. Upwards of twelve hundred pounds, I am assured, at the very least outlay! What do I not owe to the chivalrous compassion and liberality of this great nobleman, this worthy 'descendant of a hundred bright-branded chevaliers,' as I remember, I think, having once before heard him styled—or

Digitized by Google

was it yourself, dear Hugh-Helena?—But, of course, I am aware that Lord Mauleverer's princely kindness to me is entirely owing to the friendship he knows his peerless daughter bears me, and the more than maternal affection of her benignant mother!

"It is indeed very much on your dear mother's account that I have resolved to decline your third invitation to Mauleverer. In her failing state of health I would not for the world add the discomfort and harassment, which I shall have to sustain, doubtless, before I can achieve the blessedness of redemption from the *corrupting corruption* I am fastened to! My poor father, whose memory I still revere, thank God!—it is my last hold on anything good!—would leave his nameless grave to visit me with his malediction, if I contributed in anything to the sorrows and sufferings of the dear lady's passage through a world unworthy of her! Besides, my presence in London is absolutely necessary in preparing the pleadings and preliminaries of a decision in my favour in the Ecclesiastical Courts. I think there can be no doubt I shall have one, if there be one spark of justice or of humanity in the breasts of the judges there! which one would

Digitized by Google

fain hope, dearest, even though, of course, in those courts they represent all the oldest and rustiest prejudices of the Roman Catholic ecclesiastical system, framed with the view of exalting the Papacy in supremacy over every human right and privilege! By the by, perhaps my poor father was not so very frivolous in his objections to Puseyism after all! Perhaps those flowers, and golden crucifixes, and embroidered copes march before the sanbenitos of the inquisition!

"I have another pressing and predominant motive to convey me to London without delay. *I must earn my own living.* Not a penny for any other purpose but the expenses of this suit will I receive from the generosity even of that most generous of men—that natural nobleman—your father! I have only seven pounds, thirteen shillings, and a few halfpence to begin the world on! But my own wants are very moderate, and I have good hope that even the poor abilities I possess may be turned to account in that great mart of all things—of kingdoms and penny-whistles! And I would fain preserve myself from what would be to me the greatest of miseries—dependence upon the charity of even the wealthiest and the most munificent of

Digitized by Google

friends! You will, perhaps, wonder how. Men have certainly taken unto themselves almost all the lucrative occupations of life—the manufacture, the sale of everything. Do they not even make *baby-linen* now?—the cure of bodies and the cure of souls (how they cure them!), alike? But they have not yet taken to themselves the sole wielding of the goosequill! Of course they will not admit much merit in any female composition. You know it is an established truth that only men can write anything that requires reach or soar of the mind! Only men, for example, possess that profound knowledge of human nature—(if they consider women part of it, what funny things they make of us in their writings! all either simpletons or monsters!)—that profound knowledge of human nature necessary to the dramatist, or the historian, or the poet in general, or the—this, that, and the other! Whatever is expansive in intellectual vision and power, glorious in imagination, subtle in wit, overswaying in eloquence—I admit are theirs! But they have not yet decided that we are absolute idiots, and incapable of putting words together in an occasionally pleasing and attractive form. I am going

Digitized by Google

to try my hand at this art! I shall not starve these three months, at ten shillings a week, even if I fail! But I *will not fail*—as Lady Macbeth observed, in a more perilous emergency! At any rate you shall hear constantly of my progress; and before I look out for Chatterton's apothecary—(but the worthy man must long since have followed his poor customer!)—I will write *you* word! Meanwhile, do not send me a single sous. I will not accept charity, dearest! and when I do, rather from the parish than from Mr. Pomeroy's resources! And you have unhappily—but it is not too late, perhaps, in some way to repair the evil—not secured the right of calling one penny of your own, your own! Do not be concerned for me! London is the best place in the world to be poor in! And in another point we are suited to one another: there are so many miserable people in it, that one more or less is never either counted or missed!

"After all, what has happened may be ALL FOR THE BEST—as the favourite of the man who was my husband, Dr. Pangloss, in Candide, is wont to observe. I don't know that I was made exactly for the frowsy life of a country

Digitized by Google

parson's spouse. I was beginning to grow very, very tired of it! How I used to sit, counting those death's dominoes stuck upright in the churchyard of Llanhowel, musing vainly over a dream I once had—a dream of my girlhood—that I would be the first woman who by sheer force of merit obtained a tomb in Westminster Abbey! A dull and dusty finish, after all! I think I would now rather enjoy myself a little alive! It is certain I was growing too dismal for good at Llanhowel. My thoughts, like an unnatural progeny, had begun to gnaw at the dugs that gave them nutriment: in brief, I imagine I was *going mad!* Not the kind of madness you put in strait waistcoats; but one you can't, and that works very rational-seeming mischief! I tell you, I am better gone: I shall breathe freelier in a great city! The restless friction of an innumerable movement is necessary for my moral well-being, I am persuaded now! Oh, no, my dearest friend! whatever I was made for—and I confess I have very little notion myself what!—I am afraid it was not to pickle walnuts, and praise my daughters to the squire! I wish the country were invaded, and needed a Joan of Arc: you should see if I would

Digitized by Google

not give it one!—A good deal *cracked*, you must allow, am I not, to prate so?

"I have but little more, I think, to say at present. It would be so superfluous to assure you of my constant and unvarying love and devotion to yourself, and in all that concerns you!—and such assurances come with suspicious fervour from the unfortunate! I know that I can safely commend to you the care of my reputation, should any scandalous tongue assail it in conjunction with these late disastrous events; and as I do not doubt the *malignity of men, and the fidelity of their co-partnery against our sex!* for the purposes of refutation, I release you from your promises of secrecy as to my real condition and treatment at Llanhowel! You may tell to all the world—to all who ask it—that I was beaten more cruelly than a disobedient hound by my 'natural protector!'—disgraced, traduced, betrayed in every possible form! I may even need your kind testimony in the suit I am to prosecute—your evidence of the dreadful maltreatment to which I was subjected! You will gladly afford it me, will you not, dearest of sisters rather than *kindest of friends?*"

Digitized by Google

There was a postscript to this long epistle, the skilful drift of which I did not at the moment appreciate. It ran thus: "If I had time, I would venture to express a few words of regret that poor Bronwen Suett should remain under the tutelage of Madame Le Crampon! I have some reasons now to think her flirtation with Luxmoor not altogether so platonic as at one time I believed! I have lighted on some epistles when I was packing after his capture—as well as that atrocious will—which seem to me to place the matter out of doubt! You shall yourself judge—if you deem it worth the trouble—when we meet again."

Scarlatt insisted on seeing this letter, and its perusal confirmed him in all his suspicions. The sudden resolution taken—the air of independence and determination with which it was announced—my father's extraordinary interest in the affair—"the cruel way he prejudged poor Luxmoor's case, by refusing bail, which he (Scarlatt) would have been quite ready to give, so convinced was he that it was all a trumpeted-up scandal!"—every word in the letter seemed to confirm his preconceived idea! His comments were of the most exasperated kind! Lord Mauleverer, he was

Digitized by Google

convinced, and Mrs. Luxmoor, had arrived at some pretty mutual understanding during this long interview at Llanhowel! He had ascertained his lordship and she were shut up together more than two hours, with all the machinery of tears and lamentations in full play—after Luxmoor's committal! But he would take care to spoil her work!—As to her humbug of refusing *charity*—what did she call the large sums he had himself advanced, on various occasions, to her husband? Had she no share in them? How did they live until they got Llanhowel? was I not always asking money for them from him? who paid all the expenses of the trip in Scotland?—He saw through it all. She knew how tired Lord Mauleverer was of the submission and wo-begone resignation of my mother! No doubt she had persuaded him she was just the kind of woman he had been disappointed in obtaining in his first wife! (He spoke of my mother as if she was already dead!) Men had these cheating phantoms to lure them into the commission of matrimony, as well as women, he was sure! On his part, Lord Mauleverer was just the sort of object she had been all her life craving after: a peer, wealthy: one whose pre-

Digitized by Google

judices it amused her daring and versatile genius to overcome! But—and it was still the burden of Scarlatt's lay—*he would thwart her yet!*

I confess I did not quite like the tone and tenor of my epistle, apart from Scarlatt's interpretations. There really pervaded it an air of assertion and equality to which I was little accustomed from Sophia! Her expressions breathed such a spirit of restlessness, discontent, defiance—I know not what of turbulent and challenging! She had no reason indeed to be very content!—but while I thoroughly comprehended, and would have aided, by any means in my power, her resolution of breaking from her yokefellow in the galley-chain, I confess I was shocked at Sophia's pretty clearly hinted purpose to form another and immediate connexion as a consequence and aim of her liberation! The allusion to the "hundred bright-branded chevaliers" recalled the painful circumstances under which the expression was used by young Ap Howel! And though I repudiated the base notion that Sophia could have formed any such projects as those imputed to her, on my father, I so far acted on the supposition, that I was about to destroy her letter when Scarlatt declared that the numer-

Digitized by Google

ous warm eulogiums it contained on Lord Mauleverer, were inserted with a view to being brought under his observation. But he begged me to keep it rather as evidence, at some future period, of the deceitful plans she had formed, and of her craftiness of nature, which I still refused to credit! Accordingly I put it by in a small inlaid cabinet, where I kept my most valuable writings, without drawing any inference from the particular notice Scarlatt certainly took of the place of deposit.

He lost no time in his projects of counteraction, it must be admitted. The very next day, Madame Le Crampon received information of the imputations against her *caractère* in Sophia's letter, and arrived at Mauleverer, in a state of extraordinary furor, to "demand audience" to vindicate it! I had some curiosity to hear what she could say, and granted what she required. And indeed if I had not been most thoroughly prepossessed in favour of Sophia, and against my informant, the tale she told me of the artifices by which the former had "seduced the affections of that unfortunate man, *le pauvre* Luxmoor," from herself, would have stirred my indignation and even abhor-

Digitized by Google

rence! Madame le Crampon laboured under the delusion, apparently, that Luxmoor was in reality strongly attached to her, when "this woman, without honour and without pudicity," arrived to dispute a heart which was *tout à lui* until that disastrous moment! Nay, Madame was convinced that the "poor professeur's" drinking, and consequent misconduct, had altogether arisen from discovering too late what a loss he had sustained in the change he was cajoled into making! Finally, I gathered incidentally from her incoherent effusions, that she intended to astonish the world, and Luxmoor himself, by an unprecedented act of devotion to him now, in his "desperation and despair!" She would "let see, like the children before Solomon," who had really and truly loved him —for himself alone! "She who had deserted him in chains, in captivity, in a dungeon, or she who"—she left the sentence unfinished. But shortly after I heard she had resigned her situation at Plas Newydd, and had gone no one knew whither!

Sophia, however, was better informed. In a subsequent letter she wrote me, she said she ascertained for a fact that Madame le Crampon

Digitized by Google

had actually betaken herself to console Luxmoor in his imprisonment! "Why not?" she added. "What is more usual than to see phosphor on any putrid body? Madame Le Crampon's 'purple light of love' is even such, and no other; though I dare say she fancies she is giving the 'most noble example of a touching devotion,' in the style of Josephine to Napoleon at Elba, deserted by Marie Louise!"

Scarlatt, who was present at my interview with Madame Le Crampon, took unusual pains, though apparently quite by chance, to communicate even an exaggerated repetition of all the particulars of her statement before Lord Mauleverer. But his lordship's only comment was, turning to me, "I am quite of your girlish opinion now, Hugh-Helena! and your *ex-gouvernante* must be one of the most scandalous and rotten-hearted of Parisiennes!—which is a corruption of some eminence, let me assure you, Mr. Pomeroy! if you have not drawn the conclusion yourself from observation on your foreign travels!"

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER X.

LITERATURE AND LAW.

SOPHIA's first letters to me from town really almost dismayed me, from their tone of exuberant —indeed wild and lurid gaiety! It seemed to me too like the play of lightning—flickering with its wings of flame over the sky, but ready to descend, and blast where it touched!—a kind of mirth that not unfrequently covers the deepest anguish of a proud spirit, when it exists in conjunction with constitutional vivacity, and sprightliness of imagination and wit. But I have no doubt she expressed her real sentiments —though at times in a very fantastic, Madge Wildfire style—when she boasted the happiness

Digitized by Google

she found in her liberation from the society of her dreadful husband, and the carking cares and discontents which had ever accompanied her connexion with him. The weight of a mountain, she declared, was taken off her spirits! She had been wont to tremble at every approaching footstep, at the sound of every stranger's voice, lest they should bear to her the announcement of some such catastrophe as that which had at last fallen on Luxmoor, through his own villany! The hours of suspense and miserable anticipation she had spent, expecting his often unaccountably delayed return, could not be reckoned, but had long been rasping in secret at the most delicate and powerful springs in the mechanism of her being. Now she was freed from all this, she compared herself to the Ancient Mariner, when the albatross fell from his neck, "like lead into the sea." It was true that her albatross was still fastened to her neck by a strongly twisted plummet line; but she cherished the most sanguine expectations that a full and perfect release was assured to her as soon as she could get the proper machinery for a severance in action.

Digitized by Google

She consulted some of the most eminent practitioners of the Arches' Court, to whom Lord Mauleverer had given her a recommendation, immediately on her arrival in London. And these learned personages, after a thorough investigation (so she stated) of the particulars of her case, gave it as their most decided opinion that it was impossible the Ecclesiastical Court, to which she must apply in the first instance, could refuse her the degree of justice it was in its power to concede, namely, a divorce *à mensâ et thoro*, as they called it—from bed and board—on the united accusations of adultery and cruelty, which she was prepared to substantiate against her husband. The Ecclesiastical Courts, true to the traditions of their origin, adhering to the papistical doctrine of the indissolubility of marriage, could grant no more than an unmeaning decree to this effect, which was yet a necessary preliminary to a demand on the legislature for a complete and substantial release—a divorce *à vinculo*. The House of Lords—or rather one of the old formulist law lords of a former generation—had so decreed it; and yet by no means took the Ecclesiastical Court on its word, but tried

Digitized by Google

the whole case over again before its own tribunal! Sophia's lawyers, however, strongly recommended that no proceedings should be taken in the case until Luxmoor's trial was over; a decision against him, in such a matter, by a criminal court of justice, being likely to remove some of the difficulties in the way of the proof of her allegations, and to establish the strongest points of the case in her favour.

This event was, therefore, awaited by Sophia with an impatience of hope too atrociously justified—though, perhaps, evincing a degree of settled vindictiveness I had not hitherto deemed her seemingly mild and variable temperament capable of!

Scarlatt watched over our correspondence, and continued his suspicious interpretations of Sophia's part in it. And, in fact, some circumstances presented themselves in the affair, that sat not quite easily on my own mind!

I had already sent to Sophia a sum of money which my mother and myself imagined, in spite of her prohibition, would be found useful to her in her forlorn position. But Lord Mauleverer came to place a larger one in my hands, requesting me to forward it as from myself,

Digitized by Google

to Mrs. Luxmoor, since she would accept no pecuniary assistance, saving directly in her suit, from him! And he certainly took a very remarkable interest in her letters, of the arrival of which he seemed always aware; and he often requested me to read over to him such parts as I thought would give him the best notion how my "*brilliant friend*, and his own talented protégée"—so he now usually styled Sophia—was getting on in London! He seemed not pleased when I suppressed any portion of these overflows of confidence; though I never complied with Scarlatt's injunctions to omit the frequent and really eloquent and enthusiastic eulogiums of himself, with which Sophia's letters at this period were all aglow. On his part, Lord Mauleverer launched into constant panegyrics of the grace, and wit, and good sense of my correspondent's compositions, and the courage and ability with which she was following out her plans on the scene of action. And Sophia had in reality a peculiar excellence in letter-writing, and could communicate some of the best qualities of her lively, laughing, conversational tone to the flow of her epistolary style. In consequence of all this, Scarlatt would have

Digitized by Google

it I was merely made the medium of a correspondence between my father and Mrs. Luxmoor, which otherwise they would have been rather at a loss to carry on without exciting observation! But he succeeded only in harassing and irritating me with what I conceived to be the extreme injustice of his suspicions. More especially when he pointed out to me, as a confirmation of his assertions, Sophia's constant and seemingly most affectionate inquiries after my mother's health! I could not believe in the possibility of such unfeeling duplicity and betrayal!

The money I transmitted to Sophia was returned to me, with many thankful acknowledgments, but with an evident determination to refrain from accepting any pecuniary benefit at our hands. Yet the account she gave of the progress of her literary speculations, to which she had now some leisure to devote herself, was anything but encouraging.

It appeared she had a novel already completed when she left Llanhowel, which she considered in a state fit for publication, and she placed her main hopes of procuring herself an independent existence in the success of this work. But now she gave me ludicrous, though in my thought,

Digitized by Google

at the same time, almost tragically pathetic accounts, of her toils and disasters in the attempt to find a publisher willing to undertake the presentation of this novel to the world. There was really something very affecting, and calculated to inspire compassion and respect of the deepest, in the laughing anguish—the brave bearing-up and undiminished vitality of hope—which pervaded Sophia's narratives of her many mortifying failures among the London publishers. I think, if I remember rightly, this work, which afterwards achieved so signal and permanent a success, was rejected by nearly the whole round of the publishing magnates. Yet she told me the story of each successive discomfiture—described her interviews and ingenious little artifices to obtain attention—in the most amusing manner possible! Sophia had an extraordinarily lively perception of the ludicrous and characteristic: it seemed as if she could penetrate the secret of the most veiled and crafty natures at a glance, and describe them in a word! Her acute perception pierced below every species of pretentious and false external, and struck quite to the core of things, with an intuitive power and infallibility of aim that only belong to a very high order of

Digitized by Google

the faculty with which I think Sophia was peculiarly endowed—the dramatic. This gave to her the incalculable advantage, not only of seeing from her own points of view, but from those of all the surrounding dramatis personæ, whom her contriving and restless genius compelled to accept parts in that involved drama of real life in which she was at once the creative spirit and principal performer.

I often laughed, while tears came to my eyes, over these epistles. After all, there was so much that was magnanimous, self-relying, unconquerable, in this phase of Sophia's career, that doubtless something of the heroic must be admitted as an element in her strangely compounded nature! In spite of these multiplied failures, never for an instant did it seem to occur to her that her composition was worthy of its disastrous fortunes, or that it would not ultimately achieve a triumph! She ascribed them, with unquailing good spirits and resolve, to quite apart circumstances: the poverty-stricken lodgings from which she was obliged to date—her sex—it was so hard to persuade men of the existence of mind in a woman!—once, to the fact of her marching into a fashionable publisher's shocked establishment

Digitized by Google

with her manuscript under her arm—forgetting, in her absorption, to put down the streaming umbrella in her hand, which confessed her to be, yea, even *cab-less!* Neither did the bibliopolic worthies themselves allege much tangible objection against the work offered to their acceptance,—which they yet seemed unanimous in rejecting; excepting that there was something *new* and *queer* about "the thing" they did not like! They could not say exactly what it was! —but it was not written in the way Lady This, That, or the Other (it was the time of the supremacy of fashionable slip-slop) "wrote things!"—"People," commented Sophia, "who have no more idea of the realities of men and manners, than Chinese porcelain painters! But what in reality these gentlemen want, is a fine name to put in the title page—and I have none to offer them! I am sick of my own, and hope to be rid of it soon! I don't want to go *down to posterity* by the disgraced name of the villain now in Glamorgan jail! I told one of them, who twirled my package over a little dubiously as he returned it, that if he chose he could publish it under some *mannish* name or other, in order to justify the writer's possession of common sense,

Digitized by Google

and of some little understanding of the real *waysey-paseys* of this best of all possible worlds! So he shut up like an oyster at once, and *knew* my book would not, could not, should not suit him, happen what might! . . . Another of their songs is that, as I have published nothing previously, they are afraid there is no opening at this moment for an *entirely new* author! As if to be a stale old one, would be such a recommendation!"

Her nearest approach to success appeared to be with some fourth or fifth-rate dealer in the light ware of literature, who after infinite hemming and hawings, and wailings over the badness of the times, and evil estate of the entire publishing trade, without exception, generously offered to undertake the risk and expenses of a small edition of the work, on condition that he received all the profits—if any!—that might arise. Wofully adding, that the almost certain loss the author must sustain! Sophia confessed but for this last contingency, she would gladly have accepted any means of producing her work for the public judgment. But with commendable pride and resolution, she refused to incur a responsibility which she might not by her own

Digitized by Google

independent efforts be enabled to meet—and the novel was at last put aside altogether in despair.

The indefatigable aspirant then betook herself to another course of action. She wrote a play—a melodrama—understanding that no other more elevated class of dramatic composition found favour with modern audiences—and which she imagined well suited for one of the London companies. She presented it to the manager—but there also she was destined to be disappointed. He liked the play itself very much, he confessed—but his principal actor, on whose abilities he chiefly relied, would not perform in a piece in which any other character was likely to attract, in however slight degree, the public attention. If, however, she could *entirely extinguish* the female part (which, he must say, he himself thought ridiculously prominent!), and deprive all the other small parts of any kind of rivalry with the one he thought might possibly suit that eminent gentleman, Mr. Fitz-Roscius—the manager promised—to take the subject again into consideration!

On this meagre hope Sophia performed the mutilating feat required of her, to the best of her ability, and returned with the maimed product—

Digitized by Google

only to find that meanwhile a successful new piece had been produced at Paris, so that of course an English one was entirely out of the question. The manager, however, as some indemnification for loss of time and gain of trouble, handed his applicant six little Parisian pieces to translate, *as literally as possible*, as he intended to select a new and original one out of the number, of his own composition, being himself an admired writer for the stage, though he lamented he was not so much of a French scholar as it was absolutely necessary an English dramatic author should be in these times! Nevertheless Sophia, not liking the titles of one or two of these ingenious models, declined the task.

She was now in a manner compelled to turn her attention in another direction. Cheap periodical literature was at this period taking its first decisive impulse towards popularity; and she managed to become regularly engaged as a tale-writer in one of these miscellanies for the million. At a very moderate salary, and with an infinitude of drudgery annexed! But nothing apparently could exceed Sophia's satisfaction and triumph in this first permanent employment, and the prospect of the means of maintaining herself

Digitized by Google

independently. And she often expressed herself to me delighted to write for "the people," so frank, so credulous, so natural in all save that they required a "little" exaggeration in everything, and liked the colours to be laid on "perhaps a trifle glaringly," without any of the finer hues and gradations! But how honest, how kindly, how chivalrously noble and tender-hearted this good, rough, popular public was! What a yearning it had for love, still love! and what infinite allowances it made! How fearlessly might you set before it the coarsest of scene-painting, the most wild, incongruous, and even impossible inventions in character and events, provided only that you took care to show the whole under rapidly-changing and variable lights, and roared through your gigantic tubes with some resemblance to the human voice—and always at the most vehement excitement pitch, whether of the tender and loving, or bellicose and stormy passions!

In spite, however, of my persevering inquiries, Sophia refused to inform me in which of these journals her compositions appeared. She would not, she said, suffer critics so refined to estimate her talent by these efforts. "Talk of out-

Digitized by Google

Heroding Herod merely!" she exclaimed; "I do both the sexes equal justice. I out-Termagant Termagant too! My women, dearest Mrs. Pomeroy, are such strange monstrosities of good and bad, that 'as I live and am a Christian,' I am sure *you* would think I was mad in the one, and your noble father in the other! His lordship does not, I am afraid, believe in woman's goodness on so extraordinary a scale! and you would not lend the least credit to my fables of their wonderful naughtiness when they are once 'set a-going' on the wrong slide!"

Sophia's literary affairs were in this condition when her detestable husband's trial came on, a few months after the perpetration of his last offences. He came out of the affair much as was expected; yet he seemed to lack no means of procuring the best legal assistance: zealous moneyed friends evidently supported him in the back ground. Moreover, the man himself, after so long an interval of enforced sobriety, had recovered the natural sharpness and craftiness of his intellectual faculties, and spared no exertions to save himself from the punishment he had merited. And perhaps there were other than legal promptings in the course of defence adopted

Digitized by Google

by Luxmoor! I was not ignorant—though it was an exceedingly disagreeable knowledge to me—that Scarlatt repeatedly visited his *friend* in his captivity! So when the scandalous affair came on for trial, Luxmoor endeavoured to break the force of the proofs against him by asserting that his wife could prove his innocence, but that she had joined in a conspiracy of his disaffected Welsh parishioners against him,—who disliked him for being an Englishman unable to preach to them in their own dialect! And her motives were so plainly asserted to be of the most discreditable and even criminal order, that the presiding judge interrupted the plea to declare that he was not there to try Mrs. Luxmoor for a breach of her conjugal fidelity, but her husband for one of the vilest offences possible against the purity and happiness of society, by which female innocence was assailed in its earliest development, under every circumstance that could exaggerate the crime!

In spite, therefore, of all his own ingenuity, and the laboured eloquence of his counsel, Luxmoor was found guilty. But this sentence was probably mitigated by the doubts he contrived to throw in the case—above all, by the supposi-

Digitized by Google

tion raised, that means of violent intoxication—under the influence of which he was admitted to be no better than a madman—had been purposely placed in his way. And to this must be added the excellence of the character he received, it grieves me to declare, from my husband and the elder Suett. Not that I believe either of them appeared very voluntarily in the affair; for as Madame Le Crampon was the agent employed to convey Luxmoor's *entreaties* for their countenance in this manner, I have little doubt she was furnished with arguments, the cogency of which neither of them thought it convenient to dispute. Luxmoor was only sentenced to six months' imprisonment; but he was now branded publicly with his infamy, and, as a matter of course, was deprived of his living. So that when he should come forth into the world again, he was apparently deprived of all resource, even in his undoubtedly great mental powers and acquirements, by the irredeemable ruin of his character.

Still Sophia was not satisfied with this catastrophe. "It is about as adequate to his guilt, as if you should condemn a devil to a fortnight in a warming pan!" she wrote to me. "Yet, God be praised! my sorrow at the smallness of

Digitized by Google

the punishment satisfies me that, happen what may henceforward, Luxmoor has lost the power to injure me! No doubt he will come out of his dungeon willing to do me any further wrong in his scope. But if he came like a panther churning for slaughter, he cannot hurt me now, except *physically!* And, physically, I should hope that even an English wife is not quite placed out of the protection of the laws! He cannot hurt me now, I say, but in the body! I no longer love him! I wonder how I could ever have loved him—I *hate* him! I hate him—so that if it would not endanger my own life, I could actually—I almost think I could actually destroy him with my own hand—kill him! But I hope soon to cease to be a wife, and then, in no way, need I fear the monster! For man can only procure himself a slave in England by marriage—and when my marriage with Luxmoor is dissolved, I shall cease, I conclude, to be exposed to the worst indignities—stripes, spurns, the most contemptuous and capricious ill-usage to be imagined—*as one!*"

It was shortly after this event that parliament assembled, and my father and husband went to London to attend it

Digitized by Google

I did not accompany them. My mother's languishing state of health rendered it impossible for me to think of leaving her for any length of time at this juncture. Indeed her condition was so precarious—so frequently threatened the worst consequences—that one would have said, considering for how many years my father had not thought his senatorial duties of sufficient consequence to command more than his services by proxy, there was ample reason to excuse his personal attendance at this critical period. But he manifested the most eager determination, and even a remarkable degree of impatience, to appear in his place in parliament on the occasion. To be sure, events of momentous political consequence were in agitation, and the great Corn Law struggle, in which Lord Mauleverer took vehement part, was expected to be brought to a decisive issue. So I could lull myself with the firm assurance that this was my father's sole motive in desiring so earnestly to make the journey to London, in spite of all Scarlatt's renewed and very different surmises.

As for my mother, she was too much accustomed to be neglected and laid aside on almost any other consideration to complain of this de-

Digitized by Google

termination. She even wished me greatly to accompany my husband to London, observing with the most affecting simplicity "that she had not lived so long alone, without having learned, she trusted, to die alone!" But I would not leave her "to die alone!"—I must unwillingly add, that at parting, Scarlatt shocked me inexpressibly by entreating me "to keep my mother alive, whatever I did, for that, he feared, was our only chance against *that* woman, if she should get her divorce—and he did not see well how it could be prevented!" I remained incredulous. To say truth, I could not discern in Sophia so irresistible a power of fascination as my husband seemed to attribute to her! and based my security a good deal on his singularly exaggerated notion (as I then thought it) of the influence she was likely to exercise by its means.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XI.

CORRESPONDENCE.

I HAD now two London correspondents, and occasionally a third, for my father soon grew discontented with my poor mother's really physical incapacity to answer his letters, and as the task was delegated to me, he finally addressed his communications directly to me.

Very little of this correspondence was on particularly agreeable subjects. But Sophia's communications were at least destitute of annoyance and offence to myself personally, excepting that she wrote to beg me to request Mr. Pomeroy not to honour her with a call, if he had any intention of the kind, as she resided where she could not wish to receive a visitor whom she had

Digitized by Google

known under better circumstances, and who was accustomed to the opulence of Plas Newydd, and the state and order observed at Mauleverer Castle! I could easily figure to myself another reason for this reserve in the flaming good character Scarlatt had thought proper to bestow on her dreadful husband at his trial, and which had doubtless proved of considerable advantage to him.

It was somewhat amusing to me—though the diversion was of a painful admixture—to compare the varied and sometimes opposed tone of this triple correspondence. My father mentioned Sophia only occasionally, and without apparent stress on any of the slight particulars he communicated. He had seen her—she looked excessively ill, and pale, and thin—was certainly fagged to death with her absurd literary labours —in which she yet persisted with the utmost obstinacy, without considering them worthy even of acknowledgment.—Soon after, it dropped incidentally, he had interested himself in procuring her a publisher for her novel—and had succeeded. He had dipped into it: it was really a production of remarkable talent, and of astonishing knowledge of the world in so young a woman! A little too florid and high-coloured—a fault

Digitized by Google

of all young writers of genius—in its tone—perhaps!—This subject was then entirely dismissed, and he spoke of Sophia only in connexion with her suit for a divorce:—the ecclesiastical court was dragging on at an intolerably slow rate, it appeared! He was doing what he could to accelerate the progress. He had taken some trouble to secure her the services of two of the first advocates in Doctors' Commons; who, as well as her proctors and his own solicitors, were unanimously of opinion that the divorce could not possibly be refused. Finally, he announced that the cause would come on shortly for judgment, without seemingly attaching any very peculiar interest to the circumstance, saving as the fortunes of my friend might be supposed to interest me! My father's ideas, to judge from his letters, were chiefly turned on political matters; and it was unfortunately soon very easy for me to discern that anything but unanimity of opinion upon these prevailed between Lord Mauleverer and the new member of parliament, his son-in-law.

The truth is, the anticipated tergiversation of Sir Robert Peel on the Corn Law question, was already agitating the political world. The pro-

Digitized by Google

bability of this parliamentary *coup d'état*, was already a subject of general discussion; and while my father remained immoveably fixed in his conservative opinions, Scarlatt seemed well inclined to march over to the new camp with the revolted Wallenstein of the party under whose auspices he had entered parliament.

This new cause of disruption, joined to so many others themselves never thoroughly soldered, were surely ample to account for the increasing coolness, amounting gradually to open alienation and repulse, of which Scarlatt complained in his letters to me, in his relations with his father-in-law. They both resided in the family town house, but after awhile came hardly to meet one another, saving at times, when it could not well be helped, at some formal meal in each other's company. Finally, when the Peel Cabinet disclosed its mystery, and a discussion between them on the subject revealed the conclusions they had formed, Scarlatt and his father-in-law appeared confessedly in a contrariety of political sentiment not unlikely to introduce its venom into their domestic relations. And yet my husband persisted in imputing the animosity maturing be-

Digitized by Google

tween them entirely to the influence of Sophia! He cherished an opinion—I know not how formed—that but for this he could, by force of his own arguments and eloquence, have won over his father-in-law to his own and Sir Robert Peel's policy of expediency! An adhesion to which, he pretty plainly intimated to me—surely with singular bad taste to a woman who, although a wife, was also a daughter!—would secure his elevation to the peerage conjointly with myself, "whenever a certain deplorable event should take place!"

I perceived, and intensely regretted, that these two alien beings were thus thrown into constant attrition and concussion, without any of the breaks I had hitherto been enabled to interpose between them to soften their collisions. But it grew daily more and more impossible for me to leave my mother, in her now visibly almost exhausted and dying state.

Scarlatt continued to write to me with the utmost exasperation against Sophia; and his insinuations against her conduct as respected Lord Mauleverer, though guarded, grew daily more distressing and mortifying to me, without being supported by a tittle of evidence. He

Digitized by Google

confessed that he believed my father and Mrs. Luxmoor never met but at the office of his own and her solicitors. But there they did meet so very frequently! He had once himself popped in there, quite by accident, on some business of his own, when he knew Lord Mauleverer was in the place, and Mrs. Luxmoor also, because she had passed him as she went in. But she wore a thick veil, and pretended not to notice him; and a good time after, the door of the private room into which she was shown happening to open, he saw her and his lordship sitting quite familiarly chair by chair, with a lot of lawyers around them, evidently discussing some legal document before them with equal and most earnest interest! Then what could be inferred from a nobleman of his lordship's pride and aristocratic feeling on all other occasions, actually handing out one of the shabbiest-dressed women he had seen for some time, through the open streets, to an omnibus? And that Lord Mauleverer could condescend so far to Mrs. Luxmoor he had himself witnessed at the termination of this very interview — having a curiosity to observe how long it would last— from an opposite coffee-house! They came out,

Digitized by Google

talking to one another with the utmost cordiality, and evident marks of mutual and vivid interest; and though he could perceive that Mrs. Luxmoor declined the offer of his lordship's arm, they shook hands like warm and attached friends, loth to part, on the very steps of the vulgar vehicle which "the creature's poverty" obliged her to resort to!

With some obscurity of threat, Scarlatt assured me, in a subsequent letter, that he would teach "Madam" yet to remember him, though she affected to have forgotten him so completely!

There could not be the smallest doubt what she was looking forward to! he added. No man could for a moment believe that a woman so attached to the pomps and pleasures of the world, could really be content with writing horrible trash in penny publications, at a few shillings a week, and living in a garret at Kentish Town! For he had taken the trouble to ascertain where she *did* live, and what she wrote! She was only *running back, to jump higher*—trying to affect people, forsooth, with the contrast between her merits and her destiny, and excite admiration by a display of independence

Digitized by Google

and proud reliance on her talents! As to talents, he left me to judge of them. He sent me some of the numbers of her composition, and triumphantly invited me to give my opinion on them!

Now I confess that, in my judgment, those vast and rude cartoons, Sophia's earliest productions, were more instinct with the power and creative force of a really popular genius, than the finest and most elaborate of her finished cabinet compositions of later times. And notwithstanding these popular legends of hers abounded in wild and improbable adventure—in the most outrageously sudden and tremendous vicissitudes of fate—I do not know but that their bold, unhesitating confidence in the reader's belief, exercised a more powerful spell on the imagination than the artificial contrivance and arrangement of incident in the most elevated classes of fiction. And though the black and white in morals stood there as plainly and unshadedly opposed as soot and snow with each other, I am not, perhaps, wrong in thinking that the morality inculcated would better bear the test of a close analysis than all the fine-spun, self-entangling sophistries of sen-

Digitized by Google

timent and exaggerated virtues with which Sophia's writings have since familiarised the English novel-reader.

But of all things, I am least anything when I am critical! Let these remarks go for what they are worth, under that admission. My attention was destined to be speedily turned to a subject involving interests that were, and ought to have been, more nearly affecting to me. Scarlatt wrote me word that he found it impossible to resist the cogency of the Peel arguments as to the necessity of a surrender of the Corn Laws, and that consequently his maiden speech would be in favour of their repeal! He proposed to make one last effort to induce his father-in-law to join him in the evolution of opinion. But he plainly intimated that if his lordship persisted in his "exploded notions," he should not consider himself bound to adhere to them, but should speak and vote as his conscience and his duty to his country suggested!

Scarlatt's next epistle informed me Lord Mauleverer had given him a refusal in language he was quite certain that "most malicious of women" must have inspired, but that

Digitized by Google

he should neither be exasperated into any unbecoming expression of his feelings in return, nor turned from the "path of duty plainly chalked out for him" by the untoward circumstance of my father's lending ear to her malicious suggestions!

In consequence of this resolution, and in spite of my repeated entreaties, that he would at least make his vote a silent one, my husband's first appearance as a politician was in open renunciation of the sentiments of the constituency which had placed him in the position he occupied.

As he was one of the earliest of the old conservative party to give in an adhesion to the new course of policy marked out by the leader of what had been the party of resistance, Scarlatt's maiden effort in parliament commanded great attention. It made an uproar, in fact, being vehemently cried up by the new party, while it excited quite furious indignation and criticism on the part of those who looked upon the act as one of apostacy and desertion. These were the very words—nay, they were yet more severe—renegade and betrayal!—my father applied in characterising the occasion for his indignation in a letter to me. And with those words

Digitized by Google

Scarlatt continued long after to be more publicly assailed and persecuted. Even his sire at Plas Newydd was said not to be sparing in their application! But Scarlatt enjoyed notoriety as if it had been fame, and gave himself all the airs of a martyr to a great and enlightened cause, far in advance of weaker intelligences! And the success of this first effort unhappily puffed him up for life with the notion that he possessed an eloquence to put him on a level with the greatest orators of ancient or of modern times, and which entitled him to pretend to the highest honours in a state governed by parliamentary majorities.

Scarlatt never believed, even after years of ineffectual efforts to follow up his success, that he owed the brilliancy of his *début* in great measure to factitious circumstances of the moment. But it must be allowed the speech itself was a remarkable one, and condensed almost all the chief arguments and defences for the act of imitative tergiversation it announced, with rare fluency and power of language. I have since heard that Luxmoor, from the depths of his captivity, assisted greatly in the composition of this harangue. But Scarlatt must not be denied his due share in the florid, though greatly over-

Digitized by Google

laid ornamentation of the discourse, and praise for the extraordinary courage—my father designated it effrontery—with which he stood up for the first time in the House of Commons, and declared that "for the good of this great empire he had foregone all private and local considerations," and stood there to avow himself a convert to free-trade principles, and determined to vote for their application in the extinction of laws to support which, it could not be denied, he had been elevated to the place whence he made the declaration!

The alienation between my father and husband produced by this political transformation in the latter almost amounted to an open renewal of hostilities, but did not quite, until the circumstance happened which I am now compelled to narrate.

I continued my correspondence with Sophia, during this whole interval, without being enabled to detect in her communications aught but the very faintest shadows of support to Scarlatt's vehement suspicions.

It is true she continued very warm in her praises of my father and of his goodness towards her. But had she not cause, without the neces-

Digitized by Google

sity of ascribing any blameable motive to her or to him? A poor creature so persecuted, so abandoned, so friendless in the world—raised from the very depths of hopelessness by a powerful protection—her life itself possibly saved by Lord Mauleverer's energetic and courageous interposition,—indebted to him now for a prospect of fame and independence—what marvel if Sophia looked upon my father in the light of a superior being, endowed with almost supernatural attributes of generosity and goodness!—those of a Mecænas and of a St. George in one?

Of fame and independence! for Sophia wrote me word how, at his lordship's request, she had given him her oft-rejected manuscript for perusal—how he had pronounced it excellent for a first attempt—and how, finally, with a rare condescension, he took upon himself the trouble of offering the work again to the fashionable publisher, who had in the first instance rejected, but now accepted it with scarcely a glance at the MS.! Satisfied that whatever Lord Mauleverer approved must be excellent, this enlightened bibliopole in fact concluded an arrangement, on very advantageous terms, with the unknown authoress at once! Such was the

Digitized by Google

literary influence of a coroneted carriage, with silver harness on the steeds! Apollo himself on Pegasus, Sophia assured me, would not have obtained anything like so deferential an acquiescence in his recommendation!

Then, again, as Sophia had always professed the deepest admiration and reverence for intellect, why should she not feel, and declare to his daughter, her perception and homage of the great talents of my father, so long consigned to obscurity by his own neglect and the misfortune that descended on the outset of his career? Was she bound always to remember that it was my husband's family that had stood in Lord Mauleverer's way to the highest eminence as a statesman, and that these exaggerations of my father's legitimate pretensions were so many renewed accusations against the Suetts?

I could not but myself acknowledge besides that Sophia had little reason to be studious of any harmful effect these suggestive eulogiums might have on the fortunes of my husband. She hardly ever indeed mentioned him; but she often dwelt on the fact, that it was clear Luxmoor was abundantly supplied with money from some unknown quarter, in organizing his plans

Digitized by Google

of defence against her suit, which it appeared he was determined to resist. Some of her own most special witnesses had been tampered with; and but that she also was powerfully supported by the vigilance and zeal of well-paid agents, her whole cause might have gone to wreck on some of the rocks and reefs thus raised, where all at first seemed such smooth and deep-blue sailing!

I do not suppose it was quite all for love—or for hate either—that Scarlatt lent this assistance to his worthless friend. Luxmoor was in possession, through his wife, of important secrets—threats of revealing which need not have been explicitly made to compel my husband's adhesion to his cause! But it must be confessed Scarlatt had abundant incentives of his own to induce him to lend every aid in his power to the opposition raised to that wretch's luckless wife's project of divorce.

At my earnest request, Sophia kept me constantly informed of the progress of her suit—if such a slow, lagging movement of events, obstructed at every step by the most expensive and tedious technicalities of procedure it is possible to imagine, could be called progress! It was that of a snail over a wilderness of withered furze

Digitized by Google

and briars!—One of her principal difficulties, Sophia assured me, arose from the fact that as soon as a woman becomes a wife in England, she is supposed instantly to pass into a state of non-entity—or at least of suspended vitality! Her whole existence and powers as a living and rational being are absorbed in those of the man, her husband! And it required a series of tangled and complicated evolutions to reinvest this non-entity with some portion of the functions of humanity, in order to enable it to make a demand to be released from endurance of the severest kinds of suffering animated and sentient existence could by possibility undergo and survive!

The evidence of a great number of witnesses had to be taken, residing in remote and scattered directions—and this of course lengthened the proceedings very considerably, ecclesiastical law permitting evidence to be given, in the form of depositions and written affidavits, by persons at a distance, instead of peremptorily assembling the witnesses at a given day and hour, and confronting and comparing their testimonies. The accused and witnesses are not necessarily brought face to face in these courts, it appeared; and the

Digitized by Google

collisions which so often elicit truth, are thus avoided—to the great promotion, no doubt, of the tranquillity of justice, and at whatever expense in other essentials! But in these antiquated courts, it is no wonder that Justice ascends the tribunal in soundless list slippers, and dozes often and long upon her easy chair on it, amidst the undertoned buzz and murmur of her equally lethargic retinue! It was, however, a great convenience to me only to be obliged to go to Llandaff to give my testimony in the cruelty part of the Luxmoor case—for my mother's sake, who now showed unmistakeable signs of an approaching catastrophe, in the decay in all the powers of existence fast falling on her. Not to mention that I was glad of the comparative privacy of this operation, from the aversion approaching to horror I had always entertained to appearing in any position of personal publicity. But the strangeness of the whole case, considering I was a witness on behalf of the wife, was greatly increased by the intelligence I received shortly after, that Scarlatt had received a citation to attend before the same court—on the part of the defence!

I wondered much—indeed I was made very

Digitized by Google

uneasy by speculation on the subject—what advantage Luxmoor could hope to derive from any evidence Scarlatt could give! And this I was destined to ascertain, very painfully, at no remote interval, from my husband himself!

The heart-sickening delays and thwartings I have briefly alluded to, were at length all apparently surmounted. In a letter sparkling and bounding with the most confident hopes of success and of approaching liberation, Sophia informed me that a day for the hearing of her cause was at last assigned, and that her fate would be decided in the course of the ensuing ten days. And I admit that I was not much gratified by the conclusion of the note, in which she begged me, with particular earnestness, to inform her of my dear mother's *exact state and symptoms*, and whether she might hope to come and receive her kind congratulations on the approaching joyful event, in person, without too much risk of causing her any dangerous agitation?

Almost immediately after the receipt of this letter, Scarlatt presented himself, most unexpectedly to me, and to us all, at Mauleverer. It was just after the passing of the repeal act, but

Digitized by Google

I had no reason as yet to anticipate he would find it possible to absent himself from the absorbing game in which he was a player, and whose final results were still rattling in the political dicebox.

Scarlatt did not allow me to remain long in the flattering notion I perhaps at first entertained, that he had found it impossible longer to withstand a very natural wish—as I had now been for some time thinking it—to see his wife and children again after an absence of several months —the first that had ever been between us!

In the first place he snatched up Sophia's letter, which I had happened to lay down as he entered, and commented upon its contents—after unceremoniously perusing them—with the utmost asperity. "Yes, yes; she wants to watch in person your mother's ebb to low-water-mark! —after which her own fortunes are to begin to flow! Meanwhile my lord will be busy finishing with their divorce in parliament! But, fair and softly, Madam Luxmoor! you have yet a seven-barred leap to take, and your horse is broken-knee'd!" He then informed me that he had taken this run down, at the greatest possible inconvenience, to obtain my concurrence in the

Digitized by Google

best means of putting a stumbling-block in the way of this audacious woman! He knew how difficult it was to persuade me to anything reasonable, wherever an absurd refinement of fancy or feeling was concerned! But he hoped I could not hesitate on the point in question, when I was convinced that his, and my children's, and my own destiny depended on the resolution I might take in the emergency that had arisen!

Scarlatt proceeded to state that he was astonished to find his conscientious and patriotic sacrifice in support of the policy of Sir Robert Peel, seemed to have irritated Lord Mauleverer hopelessly against him! Although living in the same house in town, they had rarely met or spoken together, since the final division! From that time, his lordship had always dined abroad, at his club—or *elsewhere*—where he was possibly also as welcome as money could make a man! Scarlatt dined daily in solitary state, in Mauleverer House, and had every reason to conclude that his lordship's alienation was complete and final! Everything indeed tended towards an open rupture between them—and at no very distant period! Lord Mauleverer was evidently completely under the control and influence of that

Digitized by Google

inexpressibly bad and crafty woman—that Sophia! And she, it was plain, was animated by an unappeasable spirit of vengeance against my husband! And now no gratification more suitable could possibly be devised than that by Sophia's means, the inheritance of the titles and estates of the House of Mauleverer should pass away from himself and me, and our children! She had certainly—most certainly!—fascinated Lord Mauleverer into a forgetfulness of all the other actuating principles of his career! It was useless to dissemble to ourselves that my mother was fast speeding to a better world! Permission to marry again, by act of parliament, demanded and urged on by the zeal and influence of Lord Mauleverer, would certainly not be refused to Sophia, if she obtained the preliminary of an ecclesiastical divorce! on that battle ground, accordingly, we must meet her, for if that event took place, our ruin was assured!

And Scarlatt was determined, as he reminded me he had so often declared, that it should *not* take place! He himself had suggested to Luxmoor the plea CONDONATION! And his lawyers assured them that, if sufficiently supported by evidence, there could be no doubt that in the

Digitized by Google

Ecclesiastical Courts—secretly animated, as they are, by their tacit papistical tradition of the sacramental nature of marriage, and its theoretical indissolubility—this plea, substantiated, would justify the judges in falling into the natural current of their predilections, and refusing Sophia the privileges she so "brazenly" demanded!

In conclusion, Scarlatt told me I had in my hands the most positive proofs of this alleged condonation, in the shape of the letter Sophia had written to me on her flight from Llanhowel to London!

As to the cruelty, he went on to observe, without seeming to notice my surprise, it was notorious that hardly any extremity of it seemed to justify ecclesiastical judges, according to their favourite maxims, in pronouncing so great a punishment on the offending husband as to separate him for ever from the woman whom "God had given him as the spouse of his bosom!" And, moreover, when the shocking, the revolting provocations Sophia had given her husband, came to be considered, no man could possibly adjudge that she had received more than the just punishment of her own vileness.

Digitized by Google

and purposely arranged course of disobedience and irritation!

Scarlatt, doubtless, thought he had charged me sufficiently, by his previous arguments and allegations, to consent without difficulty to the demand, which he now made to me, to place this invaluable document in the hands of Luxmoor's advocates! And I cannot deny that the incessant iteration of the same accusation—the possibility of its correctness—the disastrous influence Sophia's over my father might have in its results on the destinies of all who were most dear to me!—now broke upon me in a livid and appalling light! But I was utterly incapable of such a deed of deliberate and even treacherous counteraction! I refused in the most positive terms, and at once! In vain did Scarlatt renew all his most potent arguments—in vain did he assure me that Sophia was the most guilty and depraved of women, and that she would be clearly proved so at the trial! In vain did he endeavour to provoke the vindictive fiend of jealousy in my heart, by declaring he was convinced her animosity against himself arose from his slighting all her advances towards a renewal of their first happily broken-off rela-

Digitized by Google

tions! I stung him, in return, by deriding the accusation as a fiction of his own absurd conceit, and by repeating to him expressions of the contempt and dislike which from time to time Sophia had dropped, even in my hearing, against him. Somewhat unjustifiably I did so, I own; but I was infinitely provoked. I even instanced her preference formerly—a preference so visible and so enduring—for her worthless satyr-like husband, and the designs he now imputed to her with regard to my father! We both grew angry. In short, for the first time since our union, my husband and I had a really violent and mutually obstinate and defying concussion!

This ended by his furiously assuring me that, in spite of my obstinacy, for the sake of truth and justice, he should feel called upon to state openly at the trial the existence and contents of the letter—which he could repeat, he declared, almost word for word! But the Court had power to compel me to produce it, and doubtless would use it! Upon hearing which I flung to my cabinet, produced the dangerous epistle, and tore it into a thousand pieces before him! And I scattered these, I remember, in the delirium of my excitement, into the fire-grate,

Digitized by Google

which was filled with an upholsterer's imitation of flame, in the shape of curling gold wire; and this, brightly illuminated by the sun, perhaps gave me the notion at the moment that I had finally disposed of the fragments! Or rather I never thought on that matter, but overcome by an agony of mingled feelings, and fearful that I should commit myself to some yet more violent display of temper and irritation, I rushed out of the apartment, and retired to my own bed chamber, where I spent several hours in a state of indescribable agitation and misery!

I had, however, disposed, as I thought, of the cause of contention; and as the fervour of my passion subsided, I grew ashamed and almost alarmed at the really frenzied violence of my own demonstration! The sight of little Herbert, with his golden hair shining under his blue velvet cap, at play with Gelert in a court-yard under my window, farther softened my heart towards my husband—the bloomy urchin's sire, and whom he strongly resembled in feature. I considered that my outbreak was of a violence scarcely justified by the provocation, remembering how much Scarlatt held to be at stake in the struggle at hand. I thought, at last, that

Digitized by Google

it was incumbent upon me to acknowledge myself in the wrong, and endeavour to effect a reconciliation with my irritated husband.

I sought out Scarlatt accordingly, and found him busy in a little private study of his own he had assigned himself at Mauleverer. So busy, that he only admitted me after repeated applications at the locked door, and a somewhat, nay, very humiliating statement of my object in desiring to be allowed to enter!

I thought Scarlatt looked very much flurried and confused when at last he allowed me to set my foot in his sanctum. But he accepted my apology with great, even suspicious facility; and during the rest of his two or three days' sojourn at Mauleverer, this painful subject was not again discussed between us.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XII.

ECCLESIASTICAL JUSTICE!

IMMEDIATELY after my husband's return to London, I received a peremptory "citation" to appear before the judges of the Court of Arches, on a certain day, under divers pains and penalties, which to my own and my mother's inexperience appeared most formidable.

The document did not state in the least what I was wanted for by this tribunal; but of course with its heading of "Luxmoor *v.* Luxmoor," its general purport was explained. Moreover, as I was now cited to appear on the part of the "respondent," or defendant, it was to be con-

Digitized by Google

cluded Luxmoor had heard of my possession of the document I had destroyed, and intended to enforce its production upon me.

On consulting with our family legal advisers, in the country, it appeared that I had no power of refusing or evading obedience to my summons. A recent Act of Parliament gave the judges in the Ecclesiastical Courts authority to compel persons making affidavits or written depositions, in causes before them, to submit to a *vivâ voce* examination and interpellation also.

I was therefore compelled to "accept service," and resolve upon a journey at once to London.

Satisfied that I had effectually destroyed the document that might have been of injury to my friend, I had no great reluctance to this excursion on any other score than my mother's extreme debility and unwillingness to part from me. But she had been as she was, with scarcely any perceptible change, for weeks; and as I had purposely concealed from her my angry discussion with my husband, and its cause, she imagined I was cited to the Arches' Court in favour of Sophia, and with her usual tender consideration for her, urged upon me not to lose the

Digitized by Google

occasion of doing her any service! On the whole, I determined on the journey; though I delayed my departure to the latest possible moment, and gave a solemn assurance at parting, to my mother, that I would return to her as speedily as possibly I could!

Just before I set out I received another letter from Sophia, who was clearly quite unconscious of my proposed excursion, joyfully informing me that her day of complete liberation was at hand, and naming it! Luxmoor, she said, in his cruellest inflictions, had often jeeringly boasted that he could get rid of *her* at any time, with the help of a little false swearing, and even unknown to herself, as the laws gave women no right or means of self-defence in such cases! Whereas, however guilty, she would find it all but impossible to get rid of him! She was going now, she said, to ascertain if such could in reality be the law of England—if any set of men, however *mannish*, could ever have legalised so monstrous a system of oppression against our sex!

I went to London, attended, at my request, by the country solicitor I have mentioned, and a female servant—finding there was no time to

Digitized by Google

wait for Scarlatt to come and escort me thither. And besides, unwilling to give him an opportunity for further discussion of an unpleasant topic.

An accident of some little importance, which happened on the line we were travelling, delayed us several hours on our journey. And I had been so anxious to lose no time away from my mother, that on arriving at the London terminus my legal friend called my attention to the fact that we should hardly have time to comply with the terms of my citation, unless we proceeded at once to our destination. We were both persuaded that my appearance at the court would be little more than a compliance with a form; and as my companion had telegraphed the cause of delay, and our confident expectation of arriving still in time to give any evidence that might be required from me, we thought it best to proceed at once to the Arches' Court, and signify my arrival for that purpose!

The case was still proceeding, though it was late in the day when we entered Doctors' Commons. I am thankful yet that I was thus spared a considerable portion of the ravening excitement and suspense of the severe and inex-

Digitized by Google

pressibly scandalous and horrible contest that had consumed the hours so far! Traces of the fearful climaxes undergone in their course, and the harassing strain on mind and nerve suffered by nearly all, appeared either in the agitated or exhausted expressions of most of the witnesses —into a numerous company of whom I was shown immediately on my arrival. These luckless people looked like the survivors of some cannibal shipwreck!

There was a great variety of persons present, male and female, among these; most of whom I had never seen till then. But I recognised some few—Squire Gawker; the servants at Llanhowel parsonage; some labouring men of the village, fathers of Sophia's maltreated schoolgirls—and the poor young things themselves. I remembered also her plump little bedazed and beflustered friend, the archdeacon. He was now sitting mournfully in a corner by himself, puffing and panting for breath, and occasionally fanning himself with his low-crowned, glossy hat. The two women Wrangham were also there—looking very much ashamed of themselves, to judge from their complexions of tarnished copper stewpans! I thought, too, that

Digitized by Google

I comprehended who another immense woman was, looking like a fitting spouse for the Farnese Hercules, who sat with her eyes fixed on her proportionate feet, gnawing her under lip as a horse gnaws at the contents of his nose bag! I remembered Sophia's description of Luxmoor's Cambridge *mastress*.

But what most concerned and surprised me was to recognise Sophia herself!—which I did almost instantly on entering the close, suffocating apartment; the only air in which entered through windows uncleaned for centuries, from a little dark court-yard, whither the light of day descended at a dusky angle for a few minutes of the day only!

She was sitting in a recess under one of the windows, quite by herself, on a coarse deal bench, which, for various reasons of commiseration or of shunning contact, no other person in the crowded apartment had attempted to share.

Never before had I seen a countenance fraught with such fevered anxiety and expectation as Sophia's! An animal in the slaughter-house, conscious of its approaching doom, could not have turned a more fearfully dilated attention at every footstep—every sign of coming

Digitized by Google

destruction—than this unhappy woman turned now on me! But though she stared at me with eyes biggened to almost twice their natural size, it is my belief Sophia did not credit their evidence for several moments after I had entered fully into their circle of vision, and had recalled my memory to her personally by putting my arms round her neck, and kissing her with all the tenderness and compassion swelling in my heart at the spectacle!

"My dear, dear Sophia!" I exclaimed; "how exceedingly ill you look! What is the matter? Surely all *must* be going well with you in your unhappy cause!—as far as we may use such a word in it at all!"

"I do not know, Mrs. Pomeroy!" replied Sophia, in a hard, unnatural tone, while a vivid streak of crimson shot up like flame to her blanched cheek. "Or rather, I do know but too well!" she continued, in a stifled whisper. "Your husband—your husband for whom I have done so much!—is at this moment giving his evidence *against* me! I know what he is saying, my God! heartless, unmanly slanderer! at this very moment—while your father listens! —and that my cause, and all the little I have

Digitized by Google

yet left of hope and consolation on the earth, are for ever lost!"

"I can excuse your irritation, my unhappy friend, at this moment!" I said, struck with consternation also at these words. "But what can Scarlatt say that will do you harm, even if he is so inclined?—And I have destroyed the only document and information Luxmoor can have any motive in endeavouring to extract from me!"

"You are come here against me then, too?—But I do not blame you, Hugh-Helena! for assisting in my destruction! *I have never done you anything but harm!* But that man has cause to believe I have done him all the good in my power—and he is casting every stone on the wayside at me, to secure my utter crushing and ruin!"

"What has he done?" What can he do?" I repeated, quite amazed.

"He has presented himself to prove—to make me appear to the world—the most worthless, the most depraved, the most shameless of women!—That my conduct justifies any measure of cruelty my husband can have inflicted upon me! That I, I, I—a woman, a fugitive from the pro-

Digitized by Google

tection of a husband whom I had already infamously betrayed and deserted—attempted—at Plas Newydd—to—to—entrap *him*—your husband—Scarlatt Suett—Oh! not, not, Pomeroy! nought of nobility or generosity is akin to him! —into the commission of the very offence I now charge upon the remorseless wretch whose chains he is wreathing round me again as with a million adder-knots!"

I shall never forget Sophia's look as she uttered these words. Her eye burned with some consuming internal fire: she looked like a pantheress erecting its mane for mortal contest with some other beast of still wilder and more savage nature! Yet was there terror in all the frenzied exasperation of her words and manner.

I was struck to the heart. "But it is impossible—it is impossible!" I ejaculated. "Mr. Pomeroy—my husband—cannot be—so base, so unmanly, so dastardly—as to reveal such a secret!—to support so infamous a misstatement!"

"You do not yet then thoroughly appreciate your *husband*, Mrs. Pomeroy, if you think he is not capable of everything meriting those epithets! I have recognised his handiwork through this

Digitized by Google

whole day's proceedings—and what a day it has been for a woman with the common feelings of one!—with more, with infinitely more!"

What a day it had indeed been!—when I saw the full account in the papers on the following morning—which, in spite of the horror and even terror I experienced, a dreadful fascination compelled me to peruse—those reports over whose corrupting and abominable details millions in all the lands where the English tongue is spoken, gloated even for weeks and months after, until they were spread to the furthest limits of the circle—I wondered only how any woman could have survived shame so overwhelming—accusation so accumulated and atrocious!

I do not propose—I should not venture, even if I listened to the promptings of a revengeful retaliation in my heart—to repeat the horrible, the disgusting scandals of that dreadful trial! Heaven only knows whether any, or what part, of those unclean revelations—of that foul exposure of the rotten core of one of the most unhappy unions ever contracted by man and woman—was founded in truth! But if none, or little, what numerous, what truly detestable perjuries were committed on that day, invoking

Digitized by Google

the name of the God of Truth !—yet I must needs briefly allude to the heads of the accusation and defence. A case unhappily so universally and odiously familiar to the world, does not require more.

The evidence against Luxmoor was of a nature too decisive and overwhelming to be rebutted. His Cambridge mistress; the two miserable women, mother and daughter, whose seduction was possibly one of his most swinishly devilish offences;—the record of a court of criminal justice respecting his infamies at Llanhowel—presented a crushing mass of testimony of his guilt in the greater of the two charges brought against him. As respected that of cruelty, the unhappy wife herself had so carefully concealed, as a shame and disgrace to herself also, the brutal facts of her long maltreatment, that my evidence reciting the barbarous scene I had witnessed in the sexton's house at Llanhowel, was the only one she had found it possible to produce!

The worst particulars of Luxmoor's inhuman behaviour—his gross and animal sensuality—his drunkenness—his desertion of his wife, and suffering her to incur actual want in its most uncomfortable forms—the part of accomplice he had

Digitized by Google

played in various attempts at the corruption of the unhappy wife, probably with a view to be discharged from obligations towards her of which he had so speedily become weary—his subsequent capricious pursuit of her—his pillaging her of her hard-won gains—his unmanly sport with her fears and womanly dread of disgrace—his yet more barbarous use of the gentler sentiments she still continued so unhappily to cherish for him—by far the majority of these revolting details, in their very nature, admitted not of proof, and depended, of course, chiefly on the victim's own assertions. But surely no woman, however inventive and depraved, could without some most hideous foundation have raised so probable and consistent a detail of the horrors and perfidies of which Sophia declared herself to have been the injured and insulted sufferer during nearly the whole period of her married life!

In answer, therefore, to charges, which he could neither deny nor refute, Luxmoor found it possible to plead only condonation! For all the atrocious acts of infidelity of which he stood confessedly guilty, condonation was his plea! and excessive and reasonable provocation for the single act of cruelty proved against him. All

Digitized by Google

the other allegations he denied, or, as a final answer and refutation, claiming the benefit of the practice in the ecclesiastical courts of requiring the person complaining to enter them with what is commonly styled "clean hands," he preferred numerous counter charges against his wife, among which were painfully and disastrously conspicuous her attempts at the inveiglement of Scarlatt Suett!

In proof of the condonation, Luxmoor produced a formidable array of witnesses and a piece of evidence of which I was yet, happily, for a time unconscious.

The very notoriety of the wretch's delinquencies in the various places he had polluted by his abode was a strong *primâ facie* proof in his favour, his advocates pleaded! Sophia's own witnesses were obliged to admit the reckless shamelessness distinguishing his depravity! The woman from Cambridge, who was animated by a spirit of bitter hostility against Luxmoor, was compelled to allow how often and violently she had forced the unfortunate wife to understand her open and continued rivalry! Mrs. Luxmoor's own testimony declared that her flight into Wales was occasioned by her discovery of

Digitized by Google

this resumed intrigue, and the persecution she sustained in consequence from her low and malignant competitor. The villagers of Llanhowel—the Wrangham women—very unwillingly—for even the two latter deplorable creatures seemed to retain a kind of respect and compassion for Sophia—were obliged to admit the notoriety of the offences alleged, and that the nearness of the dwellings rendered it all but impossible that Sophia could have avoided forming suspicions verifiable almost from her own windows! Her kindly credulous friend, the archdeacon, was brought forward to substantiate the fact that all these allegations had been urged in the most prominent manner on her notice, and elaborately refuted and denied by herself! But decisive evidence of the pretended condonation, it was, at an early period of the trial, stated, was contained in a letter from Mrs. Luxmoor to a material witness, at that moment absent, but whose approach had only been retarded for a short period by an accident!

Sophia, whom constant reports of the progress of the trial naturally reached, had not dreamed that this witness could be myself, or what letter could possibly be meant. She was racking her

Digitized by Google

brain on the supposition of a direct act of perjury and forgery on the part of her husband, when I was shown into the witness-room.

On this point, therefore, I could offer her some consolation. I could testify to the destruction of the only document in my hands that might possibly have been used against her. How its existence had been discovered at all she guessed too well; but the marks of affectionate interest, and the soothing assurances I lavished on her, must have satisfied her she had nothing to apprehend in the way of voluntary testimony against her on any point from me.

But she was justified in feeling to her soul's core the sting of the emotions naturally excited by the character of the evidence in support of Luxmoor's plea then being proceeded with! In rebutment of the charge of cruelty, this evil and crafty man alleged constant provocations on the part of his wife; and that her own misconduct, her reckless spirit of coquetry, the actual dishonour he had reason to apprehend she even courted to him and to herself, disqualified her from any claim to relief on the score of his own admitted infidelity!

In support of these dreadful counter charges,

Digitized by Google

several Cambridge young men—some of them of high rank, but chiefly of dissolute and reckless manners—were produced to bear witness to Mrs. Luxmoor's demeanour, while occupying the equivocal position she had accepted in that university. This certainly blameable submission, which consideration for her husband had originally prompted, was now alleged by his advocate to constitute a proof of her indifference to all the finer sensibilities and proprieties of her sex! These young men, to do them justice, were mostly very indignant at being called upon to appear against a woman whom they all seemed to like very much, on such a score. But the subtle, jesuitical lawyers into whose hands they were consigned speedily extracted from them all that was necessary to support the allegations brought forward. The effusions of wild wit and gaiety, unchecked by the formalities and restraints of the position she ought to have occupied—even occasionally (it now appeared) fired into reckless displays by the intoxicating beverages Luxmoor taught her to relish, or coaxed her into sharing—wit and gaiety, that lighted up into a kind of madness, flourished like the torches of the bacchantes on such

Digitized by Google

wild-aired verges of misery and desperation as those to which Sophia had been driven—were produced against her in that sober and solemn audience with the most strikingly disastrous effects.

Luxmoor's violent conduct and desertion at Cambridge seemed thus in some measure excused! But much more powerfully was this view of the case supported, when Scarlatt appeared to bear witness to the pretended attempt to lure him into an intrigue, when Sophia resided as a single woman at Plas Newydd!

My brow still reddens at the recollection that the man was my husband who made this shameful, this merciless revelation—representing Sophia throughout the whole transaction as a kind of Potiphar's wife, himself as the blameless but shamelessly tempted and craftily cajoled Joseph of the tale!

As to the inhuman acts of personal brutality to his wife, which my evidence—felt on all sides to be unimpeachable—amply substantiated, the theory of provocation was still maintained. The clownish Nimrod, Gawker, whose vanity had been so severely wounded by Sophia, sullenly admitted that on the night previous to the alleged

Digitized by Google

assault, Mr. Luxmoor, being intoxicated, had ordered him out of the house, for grasping Mrs. Luxmoor's hand as they sat playing at chess in the dusk of the evening, he concluding "parson to be asleep, snoring drunk!" whereupon he admitted that he stated he would go then, but would return on the following day with the brush of a May fox, to make a proper tie for the crafty old rascal's wig, if Mrs. Luxmoor would lend him a proper comb and brush for the dressing—being a rake and a birch broom! The Squire further allowed that he had called on the morning of the day on which I witnessed the assault "in his pink," and openly, and in as loud a voice as he could, called to "parson" in repetition of his threat over the churchyard wall, seeing him staggering about in it pretty far gone in liquor, though so early in the morning. Upon which Mrs. Luxmoor threw open a parlour window, wished him every success in his day's sport, and said she should have everything ready for him to officiate as her worthy husband's barber in the evening! Luxmoor no doubt both saw and heard all this: it was intended he should!—And he (Squire Gawker) had certainly purposed to put his threat in literal execution that very even-

Digitized by Google

ing!—only Mrs. Luxmoor seemed to have changed her mind, and having some fine lady for a visitor, received him with such coldness and incivility, that he walked off in disgust at once!

I was still ignorant of most of these particulars, with which Sophia herself was only very imperfectly acquainted, when I received my own summons to attend before the court. My arrival had been announced, and I was ordered in at the close of Scarlatt's evidence.

I had never been in a court of (so-called) justice before, and I felt a good deal agitated when I heard my name shouted, as it seemed to me, from some remote chamber of inquisition, while the messenger of the court repeated the summons like an echo at the door of the witness-room. But I pressed Sophia's hand encouragingly—and for the first time she returned my smile with one full of anguish, but also of trust and gratitude to myself personally. I felt comforted, and followed the officer out with a more assured step.

On entering the court, however, I was struck immediately with renewed consternation by two circumstances. One was, the appearance made by Scarlatt just leaving the witness-box—flushed

Digitized by Google

almost crimson with excitement—and amidst what irresistibly seemed to me an indignant and contemptuous murmur from the entire auditory! The other was the really dreadful aspect of my father, who was accommodated with a seat on the judges' bench, and had been an auditor of the whole day's proceedings. He sat with his arms crossed on his breast, and his bloodless countenance was hardened into such an aspect of stern but dreadful immoveability of endurance, that I felt instinctively some internal moral catastrophe of a tragical order was consummating in his mind.

Scarlatt joined me as I entered, and whispering, "Now, don't make a fool of yourself! Remember our all and our children's all is at stake!—you have only to answer plainly to one question!" he lent me his arm—I needed some support!—and brought me to the place assigned for persons under examination.

I remember distinctly discerning a little chalkily pallid old man, of a keen intellectual countenance, half buried in crimson and much discoloured minever, who shot a quick keen glance at me from under his black cap—and doubtless was the judge. I saw how my father

Digitized by Google

started from his gloomy absorption, as his glance of amazed recognition fell on me. But for some minutes I saw nothing else with any precision, until on a sudden a low-toned, bland, jesuitical voice came to my hearing, inquiring if I was the Honourable Hugh-Helena Pomeroy, wife of Scarlatt Pomeroy, Esq.,—the gentleman who had just left the bar?

I replied mechanically in the affirmative, and the advocate, who was Luxmoor's, seemed for a moment puzzled with the peculiarity of my position in the case. He exchanged a few low-toned words with a man in a black robe, who stood behind him, and who exactly resembled an inquisitor, with his pale, cadaverous, anxious, searching visage! The advocate then returned to his place, probably not yet quite steadied in his notions respecting me. And perhaps it was quite as much to gain time to right his own ideas, as in compassion to my evident discomposure, that he asked a series of indifferent questions of me before coming to the important one he had in view. Such as, was I acquainted with the party in the informations before the court, Mrs. Sophia Luxmoor? Had I ever visited her—, and where?—Finally, the question came—did I

Digitized by Google

correspond with her at any time? And this last was one evidently leading to a result, from the attention with which the judge himself seemed to listen for the reply.

Of course, I answered in the affirmative to these queries. And then the important one was put. Had I received a letter from the said Sophia Luxmoor, of a particular date, which was mentioned?

I was rather startled with the evidently minute accuracy of this information; but confident in the destruction I had effected, I answered composedly enough, still in the affirmative.

What had become of that letter then? the examining advocate continued, in his smooth, cajoling accents. It had become necessary for the ends of justice that it should be produced! Would I kindly produce it for the satisfaction of the court?

I answered, with a deep feeling of relief and exultation, that it was not possible; that I had destroyed the letter!

Why had I destroyed it, if I would please to inform the court?

Because it contained matters of a private nature, which I did not wish should be submitted to the notice of a public auditory.

Digitized by Google

Did they concern myself or Mrs. Luxmoor?

Both: Mrs. Luxmoor was a dear and intimate friend of mine.

There was a pause after this answer. The judge raised his grey eyebrows from his attitude of drowsy attention, and seemed to look with an expression of impatience at Luxmoor's advocate.

The latter resumed: How had I destroyed the document in question?

I had torn it to pieces.

What had I done with the pieces?

I reflected for a moment. I was about to answer that I had thrown them into the fire, when by some sudden and inexplicable revivification of memory I became distinctly aware, for the first time, that I had only cast them on a gilded imitation of flames in a grate! I know not what deep, unutterable dread assailed me, as I felt compelled to make the reply merely: I threw them into a fire-place!

What became of them afterwards?

I did not know: they were probably removed in the routine of domestic labour by a housemaid.

Digitized by Google

Should I recognise the letter again, if I saw it?

Certainly: but that was impossible.

Not quite, Madam! Would I be so good as to inform the court whether or not this was the exact epistle, repieced?

And I was astounded by having placed before me, almost perfectly stitched together again, by an exertion of the most indefatigable patience and skill evidently, the entire of that lengthy document which I had torn into so many, many fragments, a few days previously, at Mauleverer!

I was petrified with dismay! My sight was so dazzled, that for some moments I could not at all comply with the pressing demands of the advocate on Sophia's part, who, observing my confusion, but of course supposing me on the contrary side to that he supported, raised his voice in a stormy and bullying tone, to require of me whether I pretended to recognise a piece of paper which had gone through so extraordinary a series of manipulations as to have entirely lost its identity, if it had ever possessed any, with a document that might *in part* possibly have been of some similar import?

The judge interposed by mildly reminding

Digitized by Google

me that I was bound to conceal no information in my power to afford; and he requested me to answer merely to the fact whether or not this letter was identical with the one I admitted myself to have received from the plaintiff in that cause, and which I declared myself to have torn to pieces and thrown into a fire-grate?

I turned the leaves over, and perused them, hoping to find some reason for doubt—some flaw that might authorise a negation to what I now understood in the very marrow of my bones was a decisive proof in bar of my poor friend's suit for liberation!

But I could find none. Everything was inexorably correct! You could scarcely, in the greater part of it, perceive that any repiecing had taken place at all!

Luxmoor's advocate insolently reminded me that I was sworn before my God, to speak the whole truth, and nothing but the truth! A breathless silence and the most eager attention of the entire auditory watched over my hesitating perusal. At last the judge, perceiving that I was too much agitated to pursue the necessary investigation, ordered an officer of the court to read the paper aloud!

Digitized by Google

Nothing was changed; not a sentence—not a word! Unless I could have been guilty of an open, and useless, and easily detectible perjury, what could I have answered? At the same moment I was overwhelmed with the reflection to whom this act of cruel and crafty treachery was imputable! But surely, surely the heart-rending reluctance with which I was at last compelled to admit the fact, ought to have shielded me from any suspicion of complicity in this barbarous betrayal of confidence! My misery in what I was compelled to do must have been patent to all present, for immediately after I had heard the judge testily pronounce the words, "Condonation is clearly proved there!" I fainted away.

I was borne out of the court, and luckily thus escaped the hearing of the merciless and iniquitous, but according to the maxims of the ecclesiastical law, irresistible conclusions of the sentence *against* the unfortunate plaintiff in the suit!

The acts of condonation were declared to be most clearly and irrefragably proved; and thus, in consequence of her own almost unparalleled endurance and patience of the wrongs she had

Digitized by Google

suffered, was the wife of Luxmoor declared to be unworthy of any relief at the hands of the law!

The very reverend judge made a long and eloquent preamble on the necessity and policy of preserving and increasing as much as possible the difficulties in the way of any relaxation in the strength and unity of the great solder of society, by which nations and individuals are welded together, and the altar of domestic peace raised to all the holy charities and amenities of life! A conviction of the indissolubility of the marriage union, except in cases which did not admit of the shadow of doubt, was one of its main strengths and securities in this moral and happy country! He could not consider this case one, even apart from the repeated, evident, and he might add, *flagitious* acts of condonation, plainly inspired by notions of the narrowest self-interest, or still worse motives, on the part of the very discreditable plaintiff in the suit. He considered, in addition, that Sophia Luxmoor's own conduct entirely disentitled her to the relief she prayed for at the hands of that court! And apparently fired with indignation at the accusations urged against the poor woman, and

Digitized by Google

credited by him, the judge pronounced one of the severest philippics possible on her general character and demeanour in the married relation! Above all, her infamous behaviour under the respectable roof of the Plas Newydd family, so clearly testified to by the distinguished gentleman who had with so much difficulty escaped her vile artifices, satisfied him that, for the benefit of society itself, so dangerous a woman should not be permitted to escape altogether from the custody and guardianship of a husband!—whose own unhappy misconduct, perhaps, rather added to his qualifications as the jailer and restrainer of a person who disgraced her sex by imitating the worst and most injurious vices to society of the male one!

As to the charge of cruelty, considering the prodigious and almost unexampled provocations the respondent had received, this ecclesiastical Solomon could not, for one moment, entertain it on evidence so weak as the opinion of a young lady, evidently reared in the lap of indulgence and family union, apparently of a refined and sensitive organization—who was thus disqualified to form a correct judgment—on such a circumstance as a slight corporeal chastisement, inflicted

Digitized by Google

in the heat of passion, by a husband so shamefully outraged and insulted, if not betrayed, in the nicest points of honour and domestic happiness. The delicacy and sensibility of the sex exposed it always to exaggeration in statements affecting such matters! And he confessed—without intending the slightest reflection on the court of common law that had pronounced sentence in the case—he should have been disposed to sift the evidence relating to the Llanhowel children, evidently under the control and guidance of a woman so unscrupulous and artful, and animated by so bitter a spirit of hostility against her husband, and of rebellion against the divine precept that required her to love the spouse whom he had given her as dearly as herself—with the utmost suspicion and the most jealous scrutiny! When it was remembered also that these infamous charges were preferred against a gentleman of talents acknowledged so eminent, one of the ornaments of the University to which he (the very reverend judge) had formerly the honour to belong: menber also of a most religious and honourable body of men, whose piety and virtue usually rendered them the worthy exponents of God's holy word in these realms!

Digitized by Google

On the whole, therefore, the judge declared that he should DISMISS THIS SUIT, recommending the parties, in all earnestness and tenderness of christian goodwill, and conviction of what would be for their best interests, both temporal and spiritual, to return to cohabitation, and the mutual charities and forbearance of the sacred and endearing relation in which they stood to each other, and which they seemed for awhile, so unfortunately and scandalously for both—as almost always happened in such cases—to have laid aside and forgotten! The certainty that *death alone* could release married persons from the obligations and duties they had contracted towards each other and society, was, and had always been, one of the best guarantees to the happiness and purity of that most holy and beautiful relation in which, as husband and wife, they stood to each other, in this moral and Protestant country! And he hoped that while England and her ancient institutions continued reciprocally to flourish, no unhallowed attempt to reduce us in that most important respect to the level of continental and popish countries would ever be successful! Rather would he himself pray to be released before the fulness of his days

Digitized by Google

(this judge was nearly eighty!) than to live to witness in these realms so horrible a desecration of all that was most established, most English, most necessary to the preservation of the purity of our hearths! as would be involved in the notion that because two parties, who had bound themselves to each other by the indissoluble chain of marriage, found it somewhat irksome and heavy to bear, they were justified in calling upon that court to assist them towards a violent disruption of the links by the agency of secular power, which he more than doubted the Law of God (meaning the traditional one of the Arches' Court) could anywhere be found to support!

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XIII.

CONSEQUENCES.

DURING the delivery of this solemn, and, I verily believe, conscientious mockery of all right and justice, I had recovered from my swoon in one of the passages of the court, and found Scarlatt supporting and bending over me with an appearance of very great anxiety.

He seemed, however, in no wise ashamed or abashed at what he had done. "Everything is fair in war, Hugh-Helena!" he said, exultantly, in answer to the reproach and anguish in my eyes. "He can't marry her now at all! And I was determined, however the case went, to make it impossible he ever should, without bringing eternal disgrace on the name he is so

Digitized by Google

proud of—to leave no possibility that Luxmoor's divorced consort should ever be received in society as Lady Mauleverer! Do you think I was going tamely to submit to have my own and our children's inheritance (you have some regard for our children, I suppose, yet!) lost, for want of opening my mouth, and telling the truth of one of the worst women that ever lived!"

"Let me go to Sophia—and satisfy her that at least I have nothing to do with this barbarous treachery!" I implored.

"Well, go, and tell her, with my compliments, that she needs no longer wait for your poor mother's uneasy shoes!—they will never fit her, she may depend!" Scarlatt replied, but without being able to infuse the bitterness of his own malignity into me.

I turned from him—from my husband—in scorn—even in a kind of horror! And I tottered my way back to the witness room, refusing his assistance, though he persisted in following me at a little distance behind.

I entered it. Sophia was still in her former position; but with even an increase of anxiety and horrified expectation in her countenance! She arose as I approached, and uttered an eager

Digitized by Google

"Well?" Then observing the expression in mine, she sank back in her seat, exclaiming, "What has been said? what has been done? I see my sentence to a million times worse than death in your eyes!"

I stammered out a fearful and confused account of what had happened to me—and the final words of the judge which had caught my ear as I sunk into my deadly swoon!

To my great astonishment nevertheless, Sophia seemed to rally, and grow defiant under the very stroke of the thunderbolt!

"Oh, and is this the farce you have played between you?" she said, glaring from Scarlatt to myself with a really withering expression of contempt and hatred in her maddened gaze!

I reiterated, in tones too earnest not to compel belief, the assurance of my innocence. But Scarlatt would not leave me even this poor consolation. "Do you think, Mrs. Luxmoor," he said, derisively admitting the imputation, "that our farce is at all to be compared with the tragi-comedy you thought you were playing with my Lord Mauleverer, and which was to end with a death and a marriage?"

Digitized by Google

"What do you mean, base man?" she answered, flashing upon him a terrible glance.

"That you will not be Lady Mauleverer in time to be presented at court this season!" was his jeering reply.

Sophia's visage grew pale and livid, as if she had received the bite of some poisonous reptile.

"Some day," I heard her murmur to herself, in a fearful undertone, "I must be avenged!"

"But not as you thought!—Look there!" said Scarlatt, pointing with a malignancy of exasperation and triumph I had scarcely conceived possible, in the presence of such distress—to the crowd which was now streaming out of the court along the lobbies of the building. The door of the chamber in which we were was open, and my father's stately figure was easily distinguishable amidst the throng passing along. But he looked neither to the right nor to the left, and never even glanced into the apartment, where he knew Sophia still remained, and whither he had himself escorted her in the morning with the utmost attention and politeness.

Sophia stared fixedly for a moment in the direction indicated. And then she turned to Scarlatt with a smile like the gleam of light on

Digitized by Google

a steel sharpened for murder, on her violet-hued lips!

"Yes!" she said, "you have triumphed there also! But the winning gamester rises with the stakes!—*We* have not yet played out our game! —This confidence should be mutual, Mr. Scarlatt Suett! and shall be!—If it be true that you have taken only an unwilling part in my ruin, Mrs. Pomeroy! come and hear what I can tell you, and *prove to you*, to-morrow . . . at those poor lodgings of mine, where, whatever this *man* —most emphatically, this *man!*—may tell you, no one of your house but yourself has ever set foot!"

"Excuse me, Mrs. Luxmoor! but you are not, in my opinion, fit society for a lady of station and character—and I forbid my wife, on the obedience she has sworn to me at the altar, to accept your invitation, or hold any further communication with you, of whatever kind!" said Scarlatt, in tones the most imperious and peremptory, that had ever yet passed his lips to me.

"See you how he dreads the truth?" exclaimed Sophia. "But do you mean miserably to submit to become this man's abject slave—infinitely your inferior in every quality that

Digitized by Google

ought to give the supremacy—in mind, in heart, in honour, in courage even, Hugh-Helena! for did ever dastard more signally betray himself than he, when the boy Ap Howel openly proclaimed him one? Will you, I say, suffer a mere craven and base-hearted intriguer like this to become your absolute master and tyrant? For such—unless you make a resolute stand—this man, I tell you, purposes to become to you! I give you true warning—it is in his nature, in his intent! But it is not in yours, I trust and believe, to pass willingly under such a yoke!—to exhaust existence in secret and powerless sighs, like your poor mother, with this aggravation of your sufferings that your oppressor has neither brain nor heart to give him any natural claims to be one!"

With all, I could not endure this contempt and opprobrium heaped on the father of my children!

"Mrs. Luxmoor," I said, "the faith and obedience I have promised at the altar were without limitation or reservation. And if my husband requires of me the sacrifice of your friendship and—and society—I must and shall henceforth renounce both, if need be, for ever!"

Digitized by Google

"Why, then, this roof, which has echoed with other revelations, may repeat mine, if it lists, when I confess to you at last, Mrs. Pomeroy, that your marriage with this man was in reality brought about by collusion and conspiracy!" returned Sophia, yielding to the full tide of her passion. "I am an accomplice, and I confess it! When Scarlatt Suett wooed you for his wife, I swear to you by the infernal malignity of his own heart, he knew that you were the heiress of Mauleverer, and, moreover, at the very moment—besides the original wrongfulness of their possession of the Ap Howel estates at all—that his father was in secret *a defaulter and a defrauder, to an enormous amount*, with the company he founded to work the mines, and which, by a series of miracles, he still deludes and leads on to the edge of a precipice that will swallow all!"

"Come away, Hugh-Helena! She is mad, I tell you!" exclaimed Scarlatt; and he drew me, with an impetuosity amounting almost to actual violence, from the presence of the unhappy and raging pythoness.

I looked back once with a yearning sentiment of compassion and tenderness in my heart, when

Digitized by Google

we reached the exit; but Sophia had already vanished among the crowd of departing suitors, pleaders, and attendants of the various courts held within those antiquated, decayed, and therefore strictly emblematic buildings appropriated to the administration of Roman and ecclesiastical law!

We returned at once to Mauleverer House, our family town residence, where a decisive explanation with my father awaited us! He had desired to be informed of our arrival the moment it took place. Dinner was on the table, but he was in his private apartment. I sent him word that we were waiting his presence to commence the meal, hoping that further useless discussion on what had happened might be spared. And I was sitting with Scarlatt, silently condemning all that he urged and re-urged with angry vehemence in defence of his doings in the Luxmoor trial, when I heard my father's measured tread approach. He entered the dining-room—cold, inscrutable, menacing, as the statue of the commander to the banquet of Don Juan.

I began some timorous expressions of affection and welcome—I had only seen him, since my arrival, in the court of justice—when he sternly interrupted me. "Is it possible, Mrs. *Suett*,

Digitized by Google

that you are waiting for me with an expectation that I can ever again sit down, in any kind of communion or cordiality, with the miserable scoundrel whom you call your husband?" were the terrible words.

Scarlatt stared aghast at them. "Is it possible, Lord Mauleverer, you are still so besotted with this worthless woman as to be offended with me for having exposed her misconduct to the world?—which, besides, I was obliged to do! I was upon my oath. I was bound to speak the truth!"

"If you were a man with the common feelings of one—I do not say *gentleman!*—that word and Mr. Scarlatt Suett—for I will never again suffer you to debase my name by wearing it—cannot by possibility be associated! If, I say, Mr. Scarlatt Suett, you had one spark of manly or honourable feeling in your breast, I would endeavour to make you hide your head with shame for the cruel, the detestable betrayal of a woman's weakness — were it even vileness — you have made! But you have none whatever, and I will say no more on the subject! Enjoy your triumph to the fullest extent! You have overwhelmed with disgrace and dishonour from which she can

Digitized by Google

never rise an unfortunate and gifted woman—deprived her of the only disinterested friendship and protection she could yet command in the world—for I acknowledge that any woman who could ever have deemed you worthy of her notice must always have been unworthy of mine! Enjoy your triumph, but without my witnessing it! Henceforth I renounce the connexion you have thrust upon me by fraud and conspiracy, and will disown you everywhere for any relation of mine. So help me God! I will never again sleep under the same roof with you, eat at the same table with you, or join in any species of friendly intercourse with you, to the last hour of my existence!"

Scarlatt paused for a moment in his reply: but he had now lost all hope, and with it all fear. "Be it so, sir! I shall not pray the less that it may be a protracted one!—and that your admirable lady may also survive to reap the reward of her wonderful patience and endurance of the strange species of platonic rivalry you had assigned her with this distinguished ex-governess!" he said, with a combination of defiance and insolence in his manner I had not previously suspected in him. "As to my name,

Digitized by Google

luckily it does not depend upon your lordship's pleasure at present to deprive me of the advantage of signing myself a Pomeroy! And whether I am a *gentleman* or not, I shall assuredly some day be a *nobleman*—unless I should have the disadvantage to depart this transitory state of existence before your lordship! *I have the promise of it!*"

"The man who could betray a woman's generosity or perversity (it must have been a very madness, either of the senses, or of cupidity in her!) as you have done, Mr. Suett, must be a *coward!*—else I should answer you in the only manner suitable to your insolence!" replied my father, turning from him with a degree of contempt amounting to utter loathing. Then looking at me: "As to your unfortunate wife, whose once honourable nature you have corrupted to your own baseness—who has joined you in betraying her unhappy friend under so miserable a gloss of hypocrisy—if she persists in considering you as her husband, I renounce her as my daughter! What say you, madam? Will you return with me at once to Mauleverer, or never re-enter it again, and remain with this

Digitized by Google

man who is your husband only by such rites as join a tinker and a gipsy in a hedge?"

Of course—what could I do else, thus challenged?—I sided with the father of my children—with my husband! I answered this stern and insulting address in a spirit too much akin to it, perhaps—in words which I will not repeat. But the result was that I was compelled to relinquish even the prospect of soothing the dying hours of my poor mother, so rapidly advancing; and Scarlatt and I felt ourselves obliged to quit the house in which we were, before its roof had sheltered us together for a single night.

I was obliged to write from an hotel to my mother, accounting as briefly as I could for the cruel necessity of my absence from her bed of sorrow and death. Scarlatt also wrote to her, though he did not inform me of the fact—accompanying his letter with a copy of the morning paper that contained the fullest account of the dreadful trial in the Arches' Court on the previous day.

And when I myself came to read *that*, Scarlatt certainly had no occasion to renew, as he did in a most peremptory and violent manner,

Digitized by Google

his prohibition for me ever to renew any species of acquaintance or intercourse with Sophia Luxmoor!

When I had read all the horrible details of the case—when I beheld arrayed in overwhelming order and mass the series of accusations against that unhappy creature; even her own evidence of the crimes she had in a manner shared by enduring—when, above all, I read Scarlatt's account of the artifices and fascinations she had played off upon himself, with views even at the best so contemptibly mercenary and worldly,—I was seized with a kind of terror, as well as an inexpressible horror of the woman; and felt as if to venture into her society were wilfully to put myself again into the circle of the spells of a malignant sorceress! Moreover, the insults and afflictions I had undergone on her account—even her last black revelations, which Scarlatt readily persuaded me were the foullest calumnies—completed my disgust and alienation.

But this uproar and tumult of evil renown were not in all things disastrous for Sophia. Her work had appeared, hitherto with but moderate success; but no sooner was it known

Digitized by Google

that the Mrs. Luxmoor of that wonderful and detestable *cause célèbre* was the authoress of the wildfire novelty, of which no one had as yet been able to form a decisive opinion, than the sale rose to something marvellous, and edition after edition appeared and disappeared before the public avidity was glutted, or some other glittering phenomenon attracted its capricious enthusiasm!

In the depths of my heart I still sufficiently admired and compassionated my former friend to rejoice in this sudden blaze of popularity; which I was, besides, gratified to think ensured her against the corporeal afflictions attendant on poverty and desertion.

New signs of her evil influence, however, appeared before long, and completed my aversion to the cause of so much suffering and alienation to myself.

Before we could establish ourselves in the new and extraordinarily magnificent residence Scarlatt insisted on taking in town, I received a message from my father, summoning me to my mother's death-bed; but under the express proviso that I was to *come alone*. And he had already had the unkindness to send away both

Digitized by Google

my children, of whom he used to be so fond, to Plas Newydd; where their grandfather on the other side could hardly be prevailed upon to receive them for a few weeks, until we could have them brought to London. In spite of all this, of course I complied with the terms of my invitation, and arrived at Mauleverer *alone*, in time to receive my poor mother's final sigh of release.

I will not dwell upon the sorrowful particulars. But it was no slight aggravation of my affliction in the event, to ascertain that my mother herself was fully imbued with the notion that she had found a rival in the daughter of Edmund Sutcliffe! The only rival whom she had ever had to dread throughout her long, and in all other respects unhappy union!

Scarlatt—my reckless, mischief-making husband—anxious to take additional securities against Sophia's ascendancy, and to vindicate the part he had himself taken in the affair, had instilled the idea into her; which he supported by a series of suspicious facts, that in their dove-tailed ingenuity almost amounted to proof! The account of the trial, which he also forwarded to Lady Mauleverer, completed her con-

Digitized by Google

viction of the worthlessness of her once-loved *protégée*. My mother's heart might be said to be finally broken, by apprehension that vengeance was, as it were, dealt to her from the grave of the man she had so unkindly deserted, for another who repaid her thus!

She could not depart in peace, as it seemed, without ascertaining the truth of this dread surmise. My father's spirit was at once broken and embittered by the mortification and disappointment he had suffered in the result of the Luxmoor trial. His heart was touched with a late remorse, contemplating the close of the long martyrdom he knew in his own soul he had inflicted, in his pride and relentless despotism, on her to whom reparation could no longer be made. I was present at the agonizing scene, in which my mother put the solemn question to him—and received in reply, in that moment of overwhelming contrition and remorse, the acknowledgment that before the revelations of the trial were made, aware of my mother's waning condition, he had indeed at one time contemplated the possibility of making Sophia Luxmoor his wife!

My mother in return implored her husband's

Digitized by Google

forgiveness for having married him while her heart was still, and irrevocably, another's! To that cause, and the consequent feeling of alienation which had never been overcome between them, the saintly woman ascribed all the misfortune of her own life, and the early neglect from which I had suffered so much calamity. "Neither of us loved our child as we ought to have loved her—as we should have loved her, had she been the child of our love!—or we should not have deserted her to the carelessness of strangers!" she murmured. "God forgive us, and avert the sad consequences I yet foresee to this uncongenial union our poor child has formed also!—I alone am to blame, and I receive this last blow from the hand of the daughter of Edmund Sutcliffe with resignation and pardon—for I have deserved it!"

Almost my mother's dying words continued to warn me to beware of the craft and duplicity and relentless spirit of self-aggrandizement which, with the clearsightedness of a vision purified of the mists of earthly passion and resentments, she could not yet fail to see were the animating springs of Sophia's character.

Digitized by Google

Her death finally consigned my father to a condition of profound gloom and remorseful reminiscence, which deepened before the close of his remaining years into that stern and almost savage misanthropy and love of solitude that in the end constituted him the wonder, and almost the terror of the country neighbourhood in which thenceforward, with scarcely any interruption, he continued to reside.

My father was a man of very peculiar temperament and character in all things. I cannot now pretend to deny that at this very period—and even to the latest hour of his life,—he continued to cherish a passion for Sophia, of such rooted intensity and absorption that in spite of the undiminished hatred and contempt with which he regarded my husband to the last, no other woman could find sufficient favour in his sight to induce him to form a new connexion that might have effectually barred the former's expectations. But his pride and exalted notions of female honour and purity were too severely shocked by the exposures relating to Sophia, to permit him to seek her society ever again! Even in a form in which I am constrained to admit my experience of her character hardly permits me

Digitized by Google

to hope she would have refused to welcome wealth and a powerful protection!

I had cause, at no very remote period, to know that she needed what aid either could have afforded her. Scarlatt allowed me no long interval to attempt the consolation of my unhappy father. He required me to attend himself in London, that together we might enter on the course of life which he considered a necessary means of advancement in the ambitious career he had chalked out for himself. We were to constitute ourselves leaders of *ton*, and while a splendid luxury acquired for us a popular social distinction, he was to use it as a furtherance in his ascent to those dazzling stations of political eminence, he appeared to have no doubt he should attain, when once he had devoted himself to the object. We were accordingly in the midst of the splendour and tumult of our first season in the metropolis (we took amazingly as long as we were supposed to be enormously rich!) when I received a letter from Sophia, of which I subjoin an exact copy, that it may not be supposed I have added to, or diminished the facts therein so emphatically set forth.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XIV.

AN ENGLISH WIFE.

"You loved me once, Hugh-Helena! and in spite of the wrongs which, by my own assertion, rather than the accusation of others, I have done you, I have loved you—and still love you with perhaps the only pure and unselfish emotion of my existence! It is therefore to you, and to you alone, that I appeal in the extremity of my dire distress! If I fail with you, I shall know that I have no other refuge on earth—and I shall seek for none.

"You will be surprised, for you are not made after this world's fashion, to know that I ask *money* of you with this introduction! Yes money!—Not much. A few pounds will suffice

Digitized by Google

to bear me out of the clutch of the fangs of the monster who, after gnawing so long at my heart, weary of the slow process of destruction, is rending what remains of the quivering prey bodily from my breast!

"And no doubt you will be still more surprised to find that so soon after a great literary success, I can be in want of *twenty pounds!* I do not require—I do not ask for more.

"Yet why should you be surprised? Do you not know that I am an *English wife*—still an *English wife*, in spite of all my efforts to escape from so 'holy and honourable an estate' of perdition! And that an English wife is in all respects as absolutely the property of her husband as any black American slave of his owner?

"I find it so. If I had lands, their rent and yieldings of every kind would be Luxmoor's; if money, Luxmoor's absolutely; if children, they would be his, and I who bore them should have no part in them! But I have only my own person, and the products of the industry by which I weave a property, as it were, out of my own brain—and these are Luxmoor's! All Luxmoor's!—He has claimed them, and the claim is allowed—enforced! The laws of England

Digitized by Google

appointed to regulate the relations of the sexes, are so framed, that it is all but impossible for a woman to obtain any species of justice from their action—while the lightest demand of man can set the whole crushing machinery at once in motion to overwhelm us into the dust!

"A plain recital of what has happened to me, will best explain my meaning. You know—you remember—in what a delirium of amazement and horror you left me on the utterance of the sentence that consigned me back again to my hell, after a glimpse of the light, and one waft of the sweet-smelling air of liberty! But you know not—no other can ever know—the boundless excess of the agony I endured, when the full consciousness of my calamity came upon me! When incredulity was no longer possible! When I had perused the burning record of my disgrace and ruin in the public journals, which I knew would not leave the coarsest and most ignorant clown in England unacquainted with my imputed enormities—with my unjust but unutterable ignominy!—which for ever associated me in the minds of my countrywomen with the abominable perjuries of the miscreant Luxmoor—endorsed as it seemed, and ratified by the

Digitized by Google

oracular voice of a tribunal—that being of law, is, by some strange confusion of ideas, supposed to be also one of justice!—Had I in the least doubted the effect of that terrible, branding judgment, I might have read it alike in your noble father's demeanour when he returned me my letter of appeal unopened—and in the conduct of the poor and, until then, kind and motherly woman who kept the lodgings I occupied, whose husband—a respectable, quiet, good mechanic—ordered her to give me notice immediately to quit them!

"In this lowest depth of anguish and despair, a brilliant ray of light pierced the gloom, and restored me for a while to the possibility of a hopeful and even glorified and enjoyable existence! The kind of happiness which the heart of woman most craves—husband, children, the joy of household love and cares—had for ever eluded my attainment. But at least a splendid mockery of the realities I had lost spread its gorgeous wings before me, and seemed to soar into regions of a wider and more illumined empyrean, whither it would be permitted me to follow! The brightness of fame descended on my darkened name. I laid my head down in

Digitized by Google

the dust, and raised it wreathed with laurels, amid what seemed to be a triumphant pæan of victory! I was assured of a proud literary success. I took my place, I thought, where I had always most desired to find it, among the intellectually gifted and honoured of the land!

"Moreover, this success secured me, as I dreamed, from the horrors and temptations of destitution, which former experience had taught me to dread, perhaps, too much. Nay, it seemed to guarantee me even against the fangs of those grim hounds of want, which I had beheld crouching so long with their ribby flanks on my threshold! I had established myself as a writer. Continued exertion only was necessary to secure me all the comforts, some, perhaps, of the luxuries of life. Toil of this kind I had never shrunk from. Toil of this kind was even useful and beneficial to a person so situated, whose mind required to be kept in constant activity, lest it should sit down in the midst of its wrongs and crushed hopes, and, like a mother whose children lie slain around her, madden as it gazed over the bleeding, mangled heaps! A consoling phantasy visited me! I dreamed that, by force of eloquent truth, I might retrieve the

Digitized by Google

opinion of the world, and finally even compel its unwilling and careless attention to the wrongs I had suffered, and extort a glorious retribution in its compassion and homage!

"I revived. I felt even the desire of a brilliant and ornamented existence, which had always animated me, return. I deemed myself justified in taking some steps towards the attainment of this condition by the flourishing assurances of the progress of my work—the extensive sale it commanded—in the advantages of which I was to share. I took a charming little cottage at Kensington. I furnished it with elegance—with possibly some slight degree of research and taste. In spite of my misfortunes, I found there were some independent and superior spirits, who judged me from elevations above the paltry prejudices and detractions of the multitude. I formed some of these brave friendships. In the uproar of public applause I lost the sound of those serpent hisses of slander and of the narrow-minded credulity of those who believed in the aspersions cast on me. Even the cruel sneers and re-echoed calumnies of such as envied me my sunburst of popularity troubled me not. *I or gave their malice for its cause!* I had fame,

Digitized by Google

employment, the hope of a still brighter and more lasting appreciation, pleasing society, books, flowers. I dreamed not even then—after all I had undergone—I dreamed not the full, infernal egotism and oppression for women of man-made English law! I had laughed till I almost imagined I heard fiends reverberate my laughter from the abyss, at my judge's recommendation to me to return to my 'duty'—to the roof of the monster who had profaned and betrayed me so inexplicably beyond the measure of all infamy that even in that terrible brief, which will some day be his scroll of damnation, I had not dared to hint at all his atrocity! But I thought those were merely words of jeering and stony mockery, without validity or power of fulfilment. I thought I had only to refuse submission to the horrors of such a decree, to turn aside its blasting descent from my head!

"I was destined to discover my mistake. I needed money, and I applied to my publisher—who confessed himself my debtor in a heavy balance. But a wonderful circumstance had happened. In the brief interval since I had seen this gentleman last, my whole glass palace of fortune had received a stone that shivered all

Digitized by Google

its diamond panes! It came from my husband's sling! From the dungeon where he had not yet expiated the slight punishment ordained for his enormities, he had sent my publisher a peremptory notice not to pay a single farthing of my earnings to any one but to himself, my husband, as he called himself! The former, therefore, declined, without my 'husband's' signature to the receipt, to hand over to me the sums due to me, or even any smaller portion on account, excepting as a loan to myself personally, which he must depend upon my honour to repay!

"I could not believe in the full infamy of such law in a Christian land—a land that has been boasting itself the land of freedom and security of individual rights for a thousand years! I applied to one skilled in the exposition of the deepest complexities of English law—that labyrinth of the Minotaur, which you traverse, after such infinite perplexities and wanderings, only to come upon destruction at last! But, involved as it may be with regard to male rights and privileges, English law is simple enough when applied to women. It consists simply in stripping them of all rights, and denying them any kind

Digitized by Google

of vindication for wrongs! My good lawyer assured me that my 'husband' was proceeding quite legally. He had the power to enforce his demand, and my publisher had no power to refuse handing over to him the proceeds of my toil and ingenuity. Even had the ecclesiastical law pronounced for a divorce in my favour, the common law—that beauteous embodiment of the free will and conscience of the nation!—would have continued to transfer any property I possessed, or ever might possess, to the person whom the church had deemed unworthy to exercise the rights she had herself conferred upon him, in the name of God! 'The law of England, my dear madam,' said my man of it, quite pleasantly, 'contemplates a species of absorption, or *suspension of the separate existence* of a woman during the whole period of her wifehood! Wives can have no property even in their own persons, unless by pre-nuptial contract—and none appears to have taken place in this instance. It makes no difference whatever that the property in question is the result of a woman's own industry and abilities, mental or otherwise. Personal property is even more particularly than any other made over to the husband by our law;

Digitized by Google

and what can be more personal than the products of the intellect and imagination? Not only what you possess now, but whatever you may possess at any future period, is the property of your husband; and all your acquisitions will be his, of whatever species. I am very sorry for you, I assure you. I consider our laws on these points a disgrace to any civilized community; but you ask me for the law, Mrs. Luxmoor, and I have given it you! Perhaps—in so extreme a case as this—I should be loth to advise—but if your publisher were a man of spirit, and would not object to the defence of an action at law, it is just possible that a jury—but I own I should not like such an appeal to be made on my own authority—because, in a country where the men who make the laws administer them, there is no knowing *what* a jury might decide upon as the proper limits of a husband's prerogatives. I know what all the judges would!'

"But my publisher was not 'a man of spirit.' He did not choose to incur the risk of a lawsuit, and he continued to withhold my money from me until Luxmoor, quitting his dungeon, and no doubt a good deal in want of cash,

Digitized by Google

peremptorily compelled him to pay the whole amount over to himself.

"Meanwhile, as you may imagine, I found myself reduced to great straits in my cottage *ornée*. But for my dear 'people,' whom I took to write for again, after the quarrel with my timorous, fashionable publisher, I must have *starved*! But you may imagine how miserable I was—continually dunned by persons reasonably anxious for their money, and speedily trumpeted, in consequence of the denials I was obliged to give, throughout my whole neighbourhood, as a female swindler!

"At last I bethought me—or my lawyer suggested, I forget which—that as Luxmoor persisted in being my husband, there were pains and penalties, as well as privileges, attached to the position! My 'husband' was bound to pay my debts, or go to prison for them! I referred my creditors to the Reverend Carolus Luxmoor: but he was a match for me still! He was living with his wooden paramour, Madame Le Crampon, in wasteful luxury on the product of my novel; but he suffered judgment to pass in the demands made upon him, and my cottage *ornée* was stripped of every

Digitized by Google

article of furniture in it, under an execution. The landlord very properly turned me out of doors immediately afterwards, and I left Kensington with a reputation equivalent to that of a robber and rogue in the stronger sex!

"I now resolved not to write another word, but to compel Luxmoor, as I imagined he was bound, to maintain me, since he would not allow me to maintain myself. But I soon ascertained that to force this 'husband' of mine to afford me even the necessaries of life, it was indispensable that I should live with him—'cohabit' is the word—under the same roof: dwell with the vilest and most detestable of men, and with his hateful paramour also, I suppose!—at the constant danger of my life, and to the certain destruction of my health and whole comfort and peace in existence! Luxmoor was not liable for any expenses I might contract, unless he had deserted me! or had turned me out of doors! or we had separated by mutual consent, and he had engaged to allow me a separate maintenance! He had not done any of these things—good, inoffensive man! On the contrary, I had deserted *him*!—had left the sheltering protection of his roof, entirely

Digitized by Google

without his permission, you know! Besides, it was also a necessary preliminary that I should be reduced to ask my bread at the parish poor-gate—'become chargeable to my union'—before any steps could be taken to force my kind husband to allow me a portion of my own earnings to live upon!

"After all, I could not bear the idea of the workhouse! So I determined to content myself with the poor pay of my penny journals, whose conductors were not so fearful of lawsuits—and live as I best might, until it should please God to send me some release.

"But this did not at all suit the designs of my rapacious enslavers. They suspected, possibly, that I made money by my pen anonymously! So they fell upon a new contrivance to force me to come to terms with them, and give myself up as a laborious bondswoman for the remainder of my life, to provide them with the means of ease and luxury! For it is impossible that the ruffian, my pretended husband—who, I hear, has threatened to take my life whenever he meets with me—or his vindictive and jealous paramour, can be in earnest in urging on the suit Luxmoor has 'promoted'

Digitized by Google

against me, in those same wise and humane Ecclesiastical Courts, for what they are pleased to style, with that peculiar vivacity that distinguishes them, a 'Restoration of Conjugal Rights!' I have no means now of defending my part in the suit, and consequently I am told judgment will necessarily go against me, and * * * * * *

"A dreadful scene has occurred since I wrote that *and* above, which has finally driven me on the course in which, dearest, once friend!—still dearest, whether friend or not!—I ask for your merciful aid!

"The wretch, Luxmoor—quite sober for a marvel of his usual liquids, but drunk with passion and blasphemous fury—has just burst into my apartment, in spite of the efforts of the poor half-starved woman, the landlady of the wretched abode in which I now live! Dreading such a visitation, I had begged her to refuse me to every one. But my dear 'husband' would not be denied! 'She is my wife—I will see her! She is my *wife*, I tell you! Everything that is hers, is mine! What the devil do you tell me about *her* apartment—*her* private chamber—being *hers?* Everything that is hers, is

Digitized by Google

mine! She has nothing—is nothing—while I, her husband, exist!' And bursting into a hoarse laugh, 'You will see by her terror that she can't deny I am her husband!'

"The sound of his approach, boisterous as that of a cannon ball rending its way through every obstacle, struck me, indeed, with a dread I cannot describe. I expected nothing less than murder—my immediate destruction! But I was even tongue-tied with fear. Had there been any means of flight, however dangerous, I should have taken it. But there was none. I could only afford lodgings in a garret—at a terrible height above the busy and teeming, but rank and pestiferous street I was forced to inhabit. The pen with which I was plodding through my weekly drudgery dropped from my fingers—

"However, at first the wretch appeared before me in a very different style from what I had expected; and I recovered my senses when I found he did not intend completely to deprive me of them. He even deigned to apologise for the noise and brutality of his approach. 'But that naughty woman wanted to prevent him from seeing his dear wife: let no man, and *à*

Digitized by Google

debiliori, no woman, presume to separate whom God has joined! Might he request the good lady, now she was satisfied for the credit of her house who he was, to leave us for a few moments together? He was sure her children —the one especially that was squalling in the cradle in the kitchen—must need attending to! She must see—however honest her house undoubtedly was, as she said—that no disparagement to its virtue was intended! We were *husband and wife*—not only by marriage, but by the extra solemnity of a decree of a court from which there was no appeal! No, she would not go!'—(for the good creature hesitated, seeing how frightened I looked—she has a husband herself—a brute, who every now and then beats her to a mummy!)—'Then he must take the liberty of turning her out of *his* apartment; for since it was mine, it was his—and as long as *we* paid our rent, she was an intruder there when he bade her leave it!'

"'I had come to the conclusion, by that time, that if he came to murder me, he might as well! I was so weary of terror and persecution. So I told my kind landlady to go, and she went. We were left alone—my 'husband' and I. He

Digitized by Google

is a strange fellow, after all, this detestable mate of mine! He sat himself down on the miserable little broken-clawed deal table on whose planks I write, and said—looking round, quite in a complacent, kindly tone—'Well, you must admit, Sophia, you haven't made much of a move in the affair, even for yourself! I declare I think my cell in Glamorgan jail was better and more tidily furnished than this of yours in Broad Street, St. Giles! And I should think this close air can't be good for your health, after the brisk Welsh breezes!' And so he went on to tell me, quite in the same comfortable, equable tone, that it was really very absurd of me to take up with an obstinacy of living so wretchedly, when he knew for certain I might easily earn my eight hundred a year or thousand —more, in fact, a good deal more, if I followed up my first success properly! Now he would not be hard upon me, though I had attempted to make that darling Daniel of a judge believe him capable of some degree of unkindness towards me! He knew I had had my troubles; but I must allow I had brought plenty upon him too! He should need a wonderful lot of fresh air and good feedings before he got over

Digitized by Google

his prison affair! Then I had deprived him of the capital thing he had of it at Llanhowel—and his character was so devilishly *ragged*, that he did not think he should ever again be able to earn his living by honest means! Then I had set all my cursed creditors upon him, as if he had not plenty of his own! His friends were, he supposed, a little tired of helping him out of the ditch—*the Suetts* had come down handsomely; but even they were growing a little fractious, and one should not ride even an *unwilling ass* to death!

"In short, he came to make me an offer, which he thought would be mutually advantageous—and he would not boggle any longer in preliminaries! I must see he had it in his power to compel me to anything he thought proper—but he was weary of a life of wrangling himself—not particularly fond of lawyers, or of sucking oyster shells!—He had no desire to torment me personally: he was as tired of me as I could possibly be of him! And after all, Madam Le Crampon—who honored him at the moment with her affections—was a very agreeable sort of a woman—and took no delight in crossing his amusements and enjoyments as I had always

Digitized by Google

done! On the whole, therefore, he had come to the resolution of permitting me to separate by a formal document, with the understanding that he was to allow me one-third of whatever I earned by literary labour, he receiving the money in the first place, and I guaranteeing not to write less than three novels per annum—which portion he calculated would yield me—with a little extra work perhaps—quite sufficient to maintain me in a position of comfort and respectability. The other two-thirds must go to him, as he had many extra expenses at the time, brought upon him by my own folly—until things were a little blown over, when he should be able to make himself all right again—and very likely we might in time agree to look over one another's little failings, and be as happy again together as ever we had been!'

"I am surely not such an insane fool as still to cherish the slightest regard for this detestable man! But I do really believe it was the mention of Madam Le Crampon that chiefly fired me into the frenzy of rage I felt and expressed on this proposition.

Luxmoor then speedily threw off his grinning mask, and showed me again the ferocious fiend-

Digitized by Google

face that has always lurked beneath it! Since I would not listen to any reasonable terms, he said he would show me in what a husband's authority and rights consisted! He would see what I was busy at then and there!—Making money on the sly, he supposed! and he would know who my correspondents were, and on what subjects! It might be useful for him to know! —Was my Lord Mauleverer quite well—and how did he like paying his little bill at Doctors' Commons? what he got *there*, he was afraid, was scarcely worth the money!—but he supposed his lordship indemnified himself for his liberality, some way or other!

"My 'husband' then produced a chisel and hammer, with which he came provided, instead of a jemmy and crowbar, and began breaking open my chest and drawers, and most shamefully ransacking the contents of the few private receptacles I possessed—examining my papers—tossing my clothes—and scattering them in the most reckless and brutal manner all over the room.

"My cries and lamentations summoned the woman of the house—who, finding her interposition useless, at my earnest entreaty, ran out

Digitized by Google

for a policeman. But before she could return, Luxmoor had made a bundle of the manuscript on which I was engaged, and of such articles of wearing apparel which he seemed to think might be useful elsewhere—possessed himself of a sovereign and some shillings—all I had in the world—and had got hold of a letter—the one I had ventured to direct to your noble father, as it was returned to me, still sealed—when my patience gave way. I seized it to take it away from him—and luckily managed to throw it by a jerk into the fire—there *was* a fire in my grate —would there had been in yours, at Mauleverer, dear Hugh-Helena!—Yet the success had nigh cost me dear, for the brute went into such a fury over his disappointment, that he vowed he would put me into the fire after my letter! And I was struggling with him for my life when the policeman came in most opportunely and released me! But understanding 'the gentleman was my husband!' he declared he had no authority to prevent him from taking everything he pleased to lay his hands upon, belonging (what a pleasant word!) to me!

"I could, however, and did prefer a charge of assault against my 'husband.' But the magis-

Digitized by Google

trate, being a *man*, and of course animated by a very proper *esprit de corps*, took a most clement view of the results of a quarrel between 'man and wife.' Luxmoor had only to pay a little fine to the poor-box, and give his own securities (he could not have procured any other) to be of peaceable demeanour, towards me and all other of the queen's liege subjects, for the space of three calendar months!—And to show that he meant to keep his word, he came yesterday evening with a 'monition' from the Court of Arches in his hand, ordering me to return to 'cohabitation' with him! But he added facetiously—for he was quite in a merry humour—that fearing I would not come to my Mahomet, my Mahomet was come to me! In plain English, that he meant to stay with me whether I would or not, and as my lawful owner, he forbade my leaving the house under any pretext whatever!

"Nothing but my gristly old rival's jealousy preserved me from extremities of brutality I shudder to contemplate! The people of the house dared not render me the least assistance, having found out that I was really my persecutor's wife! But I had made up my mind rather to perish, than to remain any longer in the apart-

Digitized by Google

ment confined with him, when luckily, at the moment when I was about to attempt a desperate sortie, Madam Le Crampon sent up some pretended message about a gentleman of the name of Pomeroy, desiring to see Luxmoor immediately at his own lodgings! And though he cursed and muttered sadly, she seems to have him under some control! He dared not disobey —a Parisienne is not quite the sort of personage to be set at defiance where 'the sensibilities' are concerned! He went down, and she walked off with him!—But no sooner was his back turned, than dreading he might bring her over to his own plans of coercion, I slipped on a shabby shawl and bonnet, charitably lent me by the mistress of the house, and escaped, all but absolutely penniless, into the streets.

"I spent the night under a tattered cabbage-booth in Covent Garden, exposed to all manner of insults; frequently scrutinized by policemen's bullseyes—and pronounced to be some drunken market woman, not worth the trouble of station-housing and fining. It was besides a very wet, tempestuous night, which was some protection for me from coarser human violence.

"I had still a few pence left to procure a little

Digitized by Google

breakfast this morning—and the poor kind woman at my lodgings gave me a direction to a friend of hers, where I can probably remain unmolested for a day or two. But I am left absolutely destitute!—without even an article of wearing apparel of any value, to enable me to repay the little debts I must contract with the poverty-stricken, but compassionate people, who have given me shelter.

"At the same time—(I formed the plan as I sat listening to the beating of the rain among the packages of oranges, whose scent put me in mind of Versailles)—I have devised a plan of extrication from my miseries in which I think I can securely calculate on your assistance. If I am forced back to the custody of that man, I know that murder will ensue—on one side or the other! If men have the right of the club, women have their appeal to the poison-bowl!—All English law is on the side of my oppressor. English law will compel me back to a polluted home—to the arms of an adulterer whose paramour will perhaps join in the reception with secret intents to relieve herself speedily of so irksome an addition to the family! English law will not, and cannot, protect me from any the most infernal outrages, bodily

Digitized by Google

and spiritual, if offered by a husband—and as mine it persists in acknowledging Carolus Luxmoor! Therefore I will take myself out of its barbarous jurisdiction! I propose to leave England, and reside for the remainder of my days (they cannot be many) on the continent. There I can earn my subsistence, however scantily, by teaching, or by renewed literary labour—which must continue anonymous, deprived of every motive of emulation and glory—deprived of the impulse which a first success might have given to future attempts—but at least secured from the felonious depredations of my husband and his paramour!

"Perhaps it is as well for me that it should be thus! I am degraded, fallen in my own estimation! Never again can I merit such triumph as the friends whom I venerate as well as love could wish me to achieve! If a lily grew amidst corruption, could it retain its white purity and musky balm? I shall take the taint of my atmosphere!—it must be so! At my best, I could never assume the proper slave-crouch of a woman before the world: and my critics will lose one of their chief means of

Digitized by Google

abuse when they do not know that they are abusing a woman! I shall write anonymously! What matters personal fame to me now? There are none now whom I wish, like the lover glow-worm, to attract to me by its glow! I am content to live and die in obscurity, so that I may thwart the designs of my enemies! I can take no better revenge on Luxmoor and his paramour than to withdraw their victim from their grasp! I will go hence, and live under a brighter and clearer sky, among men and manners not so stern and so roused in hostility against me! At Paris, or at Rome, I shall not be shunned as if I had the pestilence, merely because I will no longer be the slave of a worthless husband, and because I have had the misfortune once to be an *English wife!*

"Will you aid me in this attempt, dearest Mrs. Pomeroy, to the extent I have mentioned? In the name of your blessed mother, whose gentle spirit I learn has exhaled its last sigh, I implore of you this aid! I own myself vanquished by calamity! I have nothing now remaining but some last vestige of pride and feeling that prevents me from appealing yet

Digitized by Google

again, in language I know he would not turn a deaf ear to, to your noble father!

"It would be too much probably—certainly—to ask you to visit me in this lowly abode, that I might take one last farewell!—weep for the last time in the arms of her who *might have been my sister!* Alas! did not your sainted mother's dying words confess as much?"

I grieved then, and I grieve still in some sort, over the course which my conviction of Sophia's hypocrisy and baneful spirit of intrigue—of the mischiefs she had done to me and my husband, and I imagined purposed yet to do us—dictated to me.

I sent her not money—for money I had not; but all the means of raising it in my power, in the shape of some valuable jewels I possessed—my right to dispose of which, having been my mother's, I thought could not be questioned.

I resided in a magnificent house, where everything needful was supplied in profusion by the Aladdin's lamp of credit! But there was as

Digitized by Google

little ready money appropriated to my use in it as if I had been a perfect stranger! Scarlatt, who was ostentatiously profuse in many things —but mean and miserly in some to a wonderful excess—declared that I was too lavishly and indiscriminately generous to be entrusted with the strings of a purse!

I applied to him for a hundred pounds. He insisted on knowing for what purpose I intended this sum—and when I told him, absolutely refused even to furnish me with the smaller one Sophia herself had requested! "Let her live with her husband: that is our best security still against Lord Mauleverer. She is going abroad in the hope only of enticing him to follow her, where she can carry on her operations more unmolestedly. Do you know what Luxmoor has told me?—that he expects he shall soon have a case for damages against your father, from the terror with which she hazarded her life to take from him a letter directed in her hand to his lordship! Luxmoor is only watching for proofs! Or perhaps they are bribing him to try for a divorce in his turn—and they hardly ever refuse it to a *man!*"

Digitized by Google

I made no reply, but I made a package of my mother's jewels, and sent them to Sophia, with these words merely accompanying: "Send me the duplicates, that I may some day redeem them. They are yours to dispose of so far. They were my mother's, who *forgave you* dying, although she knew of all your unkind treachery to her! I cannot—at least not yet! I desire never again to see you. Farewell for ever!"

Nevertheless, I was struck to the heart when in a few hours I received the jewels back, with these words in return from Sophia: "I asked for bread, and you gave me stones!—sparkling, precious stones, but stones still! I would not accept my salvation with such a message as you have sent with this glittering glass! But I am not so destitute and abandoned as I imagined myself. My misfortunes have raised me friends where I could not have dreamed to find them; and I need owe no thanks where I never feared to lose one as I have now—eternally!"

What she meant, or what she did, I know not; but I do know that for five years after she

Digitized by Google

lived abroad in a condition, according to report, of even luxurious affluence. It could not be positively known, though it was extensively surmised, how secured!

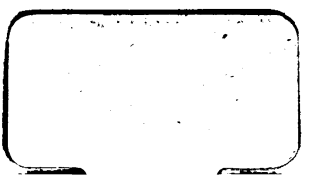
END OF VOL. II.

J. Billing, Printer, 103, Hatton Garden, London, and Guildford, Surrey.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google



Digitized by Google